Staging Loss

Michael Pinchbeck · Andrew Westerside
Editors

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Performance as Commemoration

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In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees too were dusty and the leaves fell early that year and we saw the troops marching along the road and the dust rising and leaves, stirred by the breeze, falling and the soldiers marching and afterward the road bare and white except for the leaves.

Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)

Preface

Why remember? Why here? Why us? Why now? We write this preface in Lincoln in April 2018. When I arrived in Lincoln this morning, I came off the train carriage and crossed the footbridge at the train station. Behind me on the hill is the spire of the memorial to Bomber Command and the men who lost their lives in the air during World War Two. As I crossed the high street, I caught a glimpse of the cathedral on the hill and the castle beside it currently housing the Magna Carta, which recently commemorated its 800th anniversary. The cathedral was a beacon for those WWII airmen based here lucky enough to return home. From time to time, we see vintage planes fly over the campus of the University of Lincoln where we work and the city to pay respect to its history. Also, on display recently at the castle were the ceramic poppies that marked the centenary of World War One at the Tower of London. The decision to host *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* (2014) marks Lincoln as a city of remembrance which has a topography of commemoration at which cathedral and castle stand literally at the epicentre.

Where we are sitting now looks out onto a roundabout with a recent sculpture to commemorate Lincoln's history as the birthplace of the tank. It was conceived in a hotel lobby at the top of Steep Hill but forged at Tritton Works just down the road and test driven at the common that you pass when you drive into Lincoln on the Carholme Road. It was a training ground for both the army and the air force. In the Grandstand, a relic of Lincoln's racing heyday long since gone, there is a

fading mosaic left behind by the Royal Flying Corps stationed there 100 years ago. We are writing a book about staging loss, the performance of commemoration, in a city steeped in it, politically, artistically, militaristically and historically. In doing so, we want to place Lincoln at the centre of a critical discourse around how we remember through performance today and this publication starts this discourse.

As artists, we have been working on a number of projects that enact and enable narratives of remembrance and commemoration, notions of memory and loss. Andrew Westerside worked with Conan Lawrence on a project in 2014, called *Leaving Home*, that told the story of a local woman who lost five sons in World War One. It was both a large-scale site-specific performance and a radio play and featured on the national BBC news. In fact, it is Conan who is responsible for our subtitle 'performance as commemoration', which we have used as an umbrella term for the ongoing body of work that this book attempts to critically locate.

Michael Pinchbeck's last devised performance, *Bolero*, commemorated the First World War, the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, and the Bosnian War, using Maurice Ravel's music as a bridge between these different narratives and 100 years of history. Both *Leaving Home* and *Bolero* were performed on the exact centenary of the events that inspired them. The former being performed on 4 August 2014, 100 years to the day after the formal declaration of the First World War in a village in Lincolnshire. The latter being performed on 28 June 2014, 100 years to the day of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Both projects were anniversarial and commemorative in nature and feature in chapters here. As a result of these events chiming with history as well as the themes of loss, both of us sought to reflect on a wider context of performance made in this way exploring this theme. This publication seeks to be a bridge, to bridge practices, themes, methodologies, research and discourse around notions of commemoration. We are excited to share chapters by scholars and theatre-makers working in this nascent field as part of an ongoing cartography of commemoration, a tentative map for the genre.

We would like to thank the University of Lincoln for supporting the research that led to this publication and for their support of our individual artistic practices. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to our Director of Research, Professor Dominic Symonds, for supporting (and making the opening remarks for) the original symposium, Staging Loss: Performance as Commemoration (16 June 2016) and Dr. Karen

Savage, Head of the School of Fine and Performing Arts, for her ongoing support of our work, and of this project.

We would like to thank our colleagues in the Lincoln School of Fine and Performing Arts and other institutions who have been endless fountains of critical support and encouragement including: Rachel Baynton, Dr. Jacqueline Bolton (especially the advice on being 'tough'!), Rosalyn Casbard, Dr. James Hudson, Dr. Rhiannon Jones, Conan Lawrence, Dr. Siobhán O'Gorman, Professor Mark O'Thomas, Dr. Anna Scheer, Kim Sly and Rebecca Tompkins.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Tomas René at Palgrave Macmillan for his enthusiasm and guidance throughout the project, and Vicky Bates for her continued advice in spite of our naïve questions. We would like to thank Professor Mick Mangan for his generous endorsement and support. Your words and reflections mean a lot to us.

Our penultimate thanks go to the academics and artists who spoke at, and attended, the original forum, many of whom have contributed to this publication as a result. Without their research, or their willingness to contribute their research to this wider project, the book would not exist. Finally, we would like to thank you, the reader, for engaging with this book. We hope that it stimulates debate and contributes to an ongoing discussion of a nascent field of study colliding the performative with the commemorative.

Lincoln, UK
May 2018

Michael Pinchbeck
Andrew Westerside

Contents

Notes on Contributors

Chloé Déchery is a theatre-maker, performer and lecturer in Theatre Studies at the University of Paris 8 Saint-Denis in France. Her research interests include the body in performance; collaboration and co-authorship; autobiographical practices; creative labour in the neo-liberal era. She has a particular interest in practice-as-research and actively seeks areas of intersection and cross-pollination between artistic practice and scholarly enquiry.

As an artist, Chloé is interested in developing work that combines storytelling, an anthropology of the everyday, task-based choreography, video and found objects; blurring the distinctions between fact and fiction while playfully deconstructing the mechanics of theatre.

Dan Ellin is the Archive and Exhibition Curator for the International Bomber Command Centre, and is responsible for the content of the gallery spaces of the IBCC exhibition. He is currently working to build an open-access digital archive containing over 1000 newly created oral history interviews with veterans and survivors of the bombing war.

Lisa Gaughan is a Principal Lecturer (Teaching) at the University of Lincoln's School of Fine & Performing Arts. She has a background in Devised Theatre and an interest in popular performance traditions, in particular: Comedy, Solo Performance and how actors interpret 'the real' in drama.

Louie Jenkins is a Senior Lecturer in the Theatre Department at the University of Chichester, UK. Her research focuses on shame, class, queer performativity and the art of mourning. The solo autobiographical performances of mourning narratives: *Moth*, *Five Fragments* and *Time Piece* have been performed throughout the UK and in San Francisco and Minneapolis, USA. Her present research focuses on the *Art of Mourning*—spontaneous, political and person acts of memorialisation. She has worked as a professional actor, director, play and screen writer in the UK and USA. Her feature film *Ash* is nearing completion.

Alexander Kelly is Co-Artistic Director (with Rachael Walton) of Sheffield-based theatre company Third Angel, with whom he devises, directs, writes, designs and performs. The company makes a range of work connecting the territories of theatre, live art, installation, film, video, photography and digital & online media, which tours throughout Britain, mainland Europe and beyond. Alex is an experienced educator and is Senior Lecturer in Performance Practice at Leeds Beckett University. He has taught at numerous Universities across the UK, and taught for Third Angel at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. He mentors other artists and companies with Third Angel and through his role at Leeds Beckett.

Conan Lawrence is Deputy Head of the University of Lincoln's School of Fine and Performing Arts and has been working with a range of military, heritage and civic partners to generate commemorative site-specific performances for ten years. He specialises in large-scale site-specific performance and writing and directing for radio, managing several partnerships between the School of Fine and Performing Arts and media, heritage and civic organisations. Following an early career in performing and technical theatre, his academic practice combines teaching with writing, directing and project managing for large collaborations. He is Programme Leader of B.A. (Hons) Fine Art, leading a team of interdisciplinary academics and artists in a newly revalidated programme emphasising contemporary art and its relationships with local, national and international publics.

Helen Newall is a Professor of Theatre Praxis at Edge Hill University, and a playwright, photographer and installation artist. She has written for Theatre in the Quarter; The Southampton Nuffield Theatre; Chester Gateway Theatre; HTV Television Workshop; and The Royal

Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Her work has been performed in the Millennium Dome; Bristol Cathedral; and Hampton Court Palace. She has installed work at Picton Castle, Pembrokeshire; Narberth Museum; Chester Military Museum; Pound Arts, Wiltshire; and the Morecambe Variety Festival. She researches photographic documentation, and commemoration in performance. She is a co-contributing editor of *The Road to Somewhere* for Palgrave Macmillan.

Emily Orley is practitioner-researcher whose work includes performance, installation and art- (or place- or commemorative-) writing. She is interested in exploring ideas to do with memory and mis-memory, maintenance and enchantment, history, heritage and place (and how these all coexist). As an artist and academic, she is a firm believer in breaking down the false binaries that separate practice and theory, making and thinking and writing about making. She is currently a Senior Lecturer at the University of Roehampton in the department of Drama, Theatre and Performance.

Clare Parry-Jones is a performance and visual artist, based in Wales, working internationally. Her interests in clown and shamanism, paper, land art and ritual have taken her to Japan and Siberia in recent years for research, performance and teaching. Clare particularly enjoys working in response to sites, from neolithic burial chambers in Wales to ice labyrinths on frozen Lake Baikal in Siberia. Her preferred element is water, particularly for her paper art and costumes. Clare regularly performs in healthcare centres, facilitates community arts projects and is a tutor for performing arts students, creative therapists and professionals worldwide.

Michael Pinchbeck is a writer and theatre-maker based in Nottingham, UK. His work tours nationally and internationally and has been selected three times for the British Council's Edinburgh Showcase. Pinchbeck studied Theatre and Creative Writing at Lancaster University and has an M.A. in Performance and Live Art from Nottingham Trent University. He is Principal Lecturer (Professional Practice) and M.A. Theatre Programme Leader at the University of Lincoln and completed a Ph.D. at Loughborough University exploring the role of the dramaturg in contemporary performance. He was commissioned by Nottingham Playhouse to write *The White Album* (2006), *The Ashes* (2011) and *Bolero* (2014), which toured to Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo.

Donald Pulford holds a Ph.D. from Australia's Monash University. He has taught in Australia, Scotland and England, and been published in Australia, the US, the UK, France and Germany. His work as a theatre director has been to over thirty venues in the UK, Italy, Dublin and New York. His research interests include the US avant-garde and postcolonial theatre. The *New York Times* thought his theatre lighting 'nifty'. Details of his theatre company are at www.crosscuttheatre.com.

Andrew Quick is currently Professor of Theatre and Performance at Lancaster University and is also a founder member of imitating the dog, an Arts Council England-funded performance company that tours nationally and internationally. His academic work focuses on contemporary art practices and much of his writing on performance investigates concepts of space, play, technology, documentation, scenography and performance ethics. He is the author of *The Wooster Group Work Book* (Routledge, 2007), and co-author of a number of performance texts including *Hotel Methuselah* in *Theatre in Pieces* (Methuen, 2011) and *Kellerman* (Presses Universitaires du Mirall, 2011).

Karen Savage is Head of the School of Fine & Performing Arts at the University of Lincoln, working with colleagues across Dance, Drama and Theatre, Fashion, Fine Art and Music. Karen is also co-convenor of the Intermediality Working group as part of the International Federation for Theatre Research. Karen's research is interdisciplinary with a focus on practice-as-research as a methodology in Theatre and Film practice. She has most recently completed a co-authored monograph titled: *The Economies of Collaboration: More Than the Sum of the Parts*, to be published with Macmillan International.

Justin Smith is Professor of Cinema and Television History at De Montfort University Leicester, UK, and Visiting Professor of Media Industries at the University of Portsmouth, UK. He is the author of *Withnail and Us: Cult Films and Film Cults in British Cinema* (I. B. Tauris, 2010) and, with Sue Harper, *British Film Culture in the 1970s: The Boundaries of Pleasure* (Edinburgh University Press, 2011). He was Principal Investigator on the AHRC-funded project *Channel 4 and British Film Culture* (2010–2014), and PI on the AHRC-funded project *Fifty Years of British Music Video* (2015–2018).

Andrew Westerside is Reader in Theatre at the University of Lincoln's School of Fine and Performing Arts and Co-Artistic Director of Prototype Theater. Andrew is a performer, writer, director and academic. He has performed and toured nationally and internationally and directed work including: *The Good, the God and the Guillotine* (2013), *A Machine they're Secretly Building* (2016), Fallen (2016) and *The Audit* (2018). He co-wrote and directed the BBC's Leaving Home project (2014). He has a Masters in Devised Theatre from Dartington College of Arts and completed a Ph.D. at Lancaster University exploring taste in contemporary theatre practice. *A Machine they're Secretly Building* was selected for the 2017 British Council Showcase and long-listed for the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression award.

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Staging Loss: An Introduction

Michael Pinchbeck and Andrew Westerside

About the Book

In *Performing Remains* (2011), Rebecca Schneider proposes that the (re)performance of history creates a kind of rupture: in both contemporary evaluations of the past and conceptions of the future. That such an idea is significant to us here is because the renderings of loss and commemoration explored in this book are precisely those ruptures to which Schneider refers. They exist in a territory occupied by (re)stagings, (re)doings, remembrances and (re)enactments, and pose a challenge to 'our long-standing thrall to the notion that live performance disappears by insisting that, to the contrary, that the live is a vehicle for recurrence' (Schneider 2011, p. 23). To commemorate, and to stage loss in this way is to trouble history, to trouble notions of linear-time. It is to both recall the past and remake it, in full view of the present. Indeed, we attempt to ask, through the chapters here, not just how performance *commemorates* but how commemoration *performs*.

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Across 14 chapters, our contributors consider the (re)performance of history; the intersections between theatre, performance and the commemorative; commemoration as a form of, or performance of, ritual; performance as memorial; performance as eulogy; eulogy as performance; performance as marking (-meaning, -history, -event); performance as call to memory, and performance and the history/histories (material, cultural and fantastical) of place, site and space. It asks where the personal act of remembrance merges with the public or political act of remembrance; where the boundary between the commemorative and the performative might lie, and how it might be blurred, broken or questioned. It questions how the process of remembering loss becomes a performative act.

The book is divided into four parts that, through their thematic and methodological groupings, seek to locate and critically theorise an emerging field of twenty-first-century theatre practice concerned with commemoration and the commemorative. They are disparate points on a tentative map that spans continents and cultures. Some of these practices belong to established, internationally recognised artists, playwrights and theatre companies: Andrew Bovell, Third Angel, The Wooster Group, while others are concerned with practices that exist in the public/traditional or intensely private sphere: Lisa Gaughan on the maritime 'crossing the line' ceremony, Karen Savage and Justin Smith on the 'rejourn', Louie Jenkins on 'mourning shame', and Clare Parry-Jones on the almost inarticulable torment of the loss of a child. Nevertheless, the range of practices here are not exhaustive or closed to slippage. So woven together are commemoration and loss with ritual and memorial practice, that public 'stagings' or 'performances' of loss, be they personal or national, which mark or articulate either a moment of history or particular cultural reference point, proliferate across cultural, national, political and ideological boundaries.

By Way of Example

In 2011, in the Siberian city of Tomsk, Igor Dmitriyev and Sergei Lapenkov conceived of a parade, to take place on Victory Day,[1] in which participants would carry homemade placards, portraits and photographs

[1] A national Russian holiday, celebrated annually on 9 May, which marks the victory of the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany—more widely understood as the Eastern Front of WWII, the period of conflict is known to the Russians and most former Soviet states as the Great Patriotic War.

bearing the images of their fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, uncles and great uncles who had lost their lives in war between 1941 and 1945. In 2012, 6000 people from the local area arrived to the Victory Day celebration to march in response to Dmitriyev and Lapenkov's call. From 2012 onwards, their idea, of a grassroots commemoration/parade/performance, took a firm grip of the national imagination, with identically composed parades appearing across Russia, all inspired by Dmitriyev and Lapenkov's original model. The parade would become known as *The March of the Immortal Regiment*.[2]

'"It wasn't about the history, in the direct sense, of the army and the navy," Lapenkov says "For us it was a generational history, the history of all the people who went through the 1940s. It was about human memory"' (Prokopyeva 2017). Film and photographic documentation of the marches is breath-taking. Thousands upon thousands of placards and images, from the composed to the crude, are raised aloft—interspersed with the occasional Russian or Soviet flag—as tightly packed crowds walk their designated routes at a mournful crawl. That it is performance, there is no doubt: the procession is a sea of masks, a black-and-white parade of the lost or forgotten, marching together, again, forever. Those holding the placards and portraits, their living descendants, (dis)appear as if they were puppeteers, willingly (and purposely) invisible to the *mise en scène* composed above their heads.

That the march was quickly co-opted by the state (as soon as 2015) says something important about commemoration, performance, and pertinently, performance-as-commemoration. It was of crucial importance, Lapenkov argued, that the *Immortal Regiment* remained 'non-commercial, apolitical, and nongovernmental' (ibid.). The problem it faced, however, was that it struck a much more meaningful, and ultimately, historically literate chord with its participants than the official, state sanctioned, Victory Day remembrances. That it struck such a chord was because what was staged—commemorated—was not victory, but loss. It spoke, collectively, to the individual experiences of loss and war, of absence and remembrance. An army of ghosts, each with their own small, personal, human story—divorced from the grand narratives of victory. If this regiment saw victory, their victory was in death.

[2] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a9/Victory_Day_in_Kaliningrad_2017-05-09_60.jpg.

> "The Immortal Regiment was doomed from the moment of its birth", prominent blogger and former Duma Deputy Igor Yakovenko wrote on May 10. "The likelihood that the authorities would tolerate an independent grassroots movement that was becoming national and even international was precisely zero. The transformation of a grassroots initiative into a state ritual and part of the quasi-religious cult of 'victory' began already in 2014…. That was the end of the human story of the Immortal Regiment and the beginning of the story of a state ritualistic cult". (Prokopyeva 2017)

Such was the groundswell of local, and then national levels of community-led support for the marches that Russian authorities had no choice, politically speaking, but to incorporate them into the official narrative of Victory Day. In doing so, the marches demonstrate the problematic tension (an idea articulated further by Westerside in Chapter 2) at the heart of 'official' commemoration: that they attempt, at the same time, to testify to narratives that are often pulling away from one another—the personal and the national.

And yet, through this kind of self-constituted, unofficial performance of loss, the *Immortal Regiment* in Dmitriyev and Lapenkov's original incarnation found a way to speak to, about and for the 30 million lives lost on the Eastern Front in ways that the homogenising, historically clumsy nation-building narratives of Russian state-remembrance could not. Performance-as-commemoration, then, perhaps is seen at its clearest when people are placed in contrast to the stories told about them. But the line between the two remains incredibly fine. In the case of the *Immortal Regiment*, the simplicity and elegance of Dmitriyev and Lapenkov's commemorative performance, that its scenographies and stage directions could become 'franchised', equally meant that it very easily 'became a case of the very 'mandatory patriotism' to which [it] was created as an alternative' (ibid.).

Commemoration Fatigue

One of the aims of this volume was to address a current trend towards the use of the phrase 'commemoration fatigue' in recent scholarship and journalism. As we write this, almost half way through 2018, we find ourselves living through the decades and centenaries that mark the significant British losses of previous generations, and importantly, in contexts that are international in their scale. And the question of *how* to remember, has persisted.

As early as June 2013, over twelve months before the centenary anniversary of the outbreak of World War One, Harry Mount in *The Times*, suggested that 'the danger is, though, that while remembering the facts of the First World War, we forget what it was really like – and that, by overdoing the commemorations, war fatigue will set in' (Mount 2013). Mount's concerns seem prescient, and a number of other cultural commentators have asked the same question to problematise their nation's ways of remembering. In *The Guardian*, only a month later, Matthias Strohn suggested, hopefully, that 'by limiting the number of high-profile events, the UK will prevent a "commemoration fatigue" setting in among the population.' As we reach the end point of that particular (WWI) cycle of commemoration, it remains unclear whether or not this was true. It may well be the case that this four-year cycle of remembrance was somewhat obscured or refracted in the public consciousness as a result of the United Kingdom's *contemporary* relationship with Europe, as played out through its proposed withdrawal from the European Union. How *that* will be 'commemorated' and remembered, only the coming months and years can tell, but it calls to mind (in 2018), Action Hero's ongoing *Oh Europa* (2018) project. They write:

> Over 6 months in 2018, Action Hero are travelling over 30,000km across Europe in a motorhome, recording songs of love, hope, heartbreak, loss and desire, sung by the people we meet. This ever-evolving archive will be broadcasting 24/7 from beacons placed, by us, at literal edges of the continent, but also the invisible boundaries, margins, cultural junctures and geological edgelands of Europe. (Action Hero 2018)

While concerned with Europe *as such*, the piece cannot help but feel inspired by the fractures and fissures running through contemporary European (and global) politics. Indeed, they write that the piece 'seeks to imagine other forms of mapping, one that represents the relationships between people and space rather than one that is about territory' (ibid.). Like the *Immortal Regiment*, *Oh Europa* produces a legacy of *people and places and stories and lives* that become emblematic of (that commemorates) loss or absence; resisting and running counter to state-level, nation-level narratives, such that we might 're-imagine our relationships to each other outside of the dominant discourse' (ibid.).

What *can* be said of commemoration, with some degree of certainty, and *pace* Mount, is that each generation views the events of memorial,

centenary, and anniversary, through its own cultural, political and technological lenses.

Later in 2013, to describe the volume of documentaries and news footage online commemorating the 50th anniversary of the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy, journalist Alexandra Petri used the term 'Commemoration Fatigue' in an article for the *Washington Post* (Petri 2013). She describes the near 24-hour footage of the event as an 'orgy of commemoration' and, with a tongue-in-cheek brand of *reductio ad absurdum*, suggests that 'in the future there will be no news. In the future all news will be Retrospectives and Commemorations of the Days when there was news' (Petri 2013). Speaking to this theme from first-hand experience, I (Michael) remember flying from San Francisco to London on 11 September 2015 and watching real-time footage of the events of 14 years ago play out on national news channels, a re-staging in a media age; a mediated and mediatised battle re-enactment—indeed, Baudrillard writ large. Here, as we looked at events unfold on screen just as we did in 2001, the moment is lived again; the past, in its collision with the present, saw us commemorating not only the seismic shock of 9/11, but also the news coverage of what took place—the commemoration of an archive.

The idea of 'commemoration fatigue' was also introduced in the *Australian Journal of Political Science* by Joan Beaumont in 2015 to describe Australia's commemoration of World War One. She claimed that, 'the commemorations in 2014–15 triggered some debate about the commodification of the memory of war and the possibility of commemoration fatigue' (Beaumont 2015). Nevertheless, small- and large-scale commemorations of events and battles throughout the First World War (Passchendaele, the Somme and Gallipoli as the most obvious examples) continue as we approach the anniversary of the Armistice itself, and each appears wracked with concern about how best to reflect upon the significant losses on both sides.

In November 2017, in a provocatively titled piece in *The Guardian*, 'No more remembrance days – let's consign the 20th century to history', Simon Jenkins writes that by marking significant dates in the past, we simply perpetuate the tensions between nations that caused them. This is true, he claims, of most recent conflicts in many of the regions explored in the book and, as part of his argument, he makes reference to the corporatisation of the poppy—echoing Beaumont's views on the 'commodification' of war. Jenkins also cites David Rieff's book, *In Praise*

of Forgetting: Historical Memory and Its Ironies (2016), who claims that a certain kind of commemoration 'at best is a consolation and an ego boost, at worst a wallowing … in past triumphs, injuries and traumas' (Rieff 2016, 109). Jenkins ends with a call to arms that 'It is time to remember the future' (Jenkins 2017).

The most recent response to the notion of commemoration fatigue or its problematic politics comes in *Canadian Theatre Review*'s issue on the theme. In their introduction, Selena Couture and Heather Davis-Fisch write about how, in Canada in 2017, 'commemorative monuments [have] become flashpoints where the relentless struggle to control such troubling historical narratives erupted into conflict' (Couture and Davis-Fisch 2018, p. 5). This notion of troubling historical narratives informs *Staging Loss*. Mindful of this widespread wariness of commemoration as a troubled and troubling act, our publication, like Dmitriyev and Lapenkov's *Immortal Regiment* and Action Hero's *Oh Europa*, remembers both past and future, following Marshall Macluhan's advice that 'We look at the present *via* the rear-view mirror, we march backwards into the future' (MacLuhan 1975, 110–111). The publication offers a twenty-first century revisionist approach to George Santayana's celebrated phrase, 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it' (Santayana 1924, 284) to suggest that it is precisely within those repetitions of the past that the performance of commemoration might reside.

Sections, Inflections; Threads, Connections

Commemoration, it would appear, is not always about loss; nor is loss always commemorated. Alexander Kelly wrestles with this ethical dilemma in his chapter 'Cheers, Grandad!', where, by focusing on his *grandfather*'s survival after ejecting from a WWII Beaufighter bomber, he subconsciously erases the loss of his grandfather's pilot. He also makes the point that theatre sometimes never makes explicit its autobiographical impulse, naming his Grandad for the first time. And yet, it is perhaps only in relation to theatre and performance as a mediating term that the two coordinates, loss and commemoration, make sense as a roadmap for critical inquiry. The through-lines we have chosen to trace here are at once chronological, geographical, auto-ethnographical and autobiographical, with notions of memorial, celebration, temporality and remembrance at their heart.

In Part I, 'This is Not a Re-enactment: Staging the Voices of the Dead', Andrew Westerside, Helen Newall, Karen Savage and Justin Smith lay a critical foundation for the notion of performance-*as*-commemoration through a detailed examination of theatrical, cinematic, and installation projects that seek to revive, retrace, and restage the experiences of the First World War.

Where Westerside's opening chapter considers the act of performance-as-commemoration as an act fundamentally (and perhaps politically) distinct from broader cultural forms of collective remembering, Newall—in Chapter 4—refers to the notion of *epoché*, as a kind of 'sacred differentiation of time and space' to articulate the kind of communal and reflective space that performance provides. In reference to both artistic works of her own, as well as Cummins and Piper's *Blood Swept Lands and Fields of Red* (2014) Newall's chapter articulates a desire (on the part of both artist and audience) to participate in these kinds of performances '*as* commemoration rather than look at it as aesthetic spectacle'. That such a desire is possible appears to stem from, 'for all the suspicions of its fallacies', the intent of the artist. In her conclusion, Newall argues that it is in the *practice of making* that we sow the seeds for the commemorative, and it is perhaps the case that rather than place a division between the commemorative and the aesthetic, that the aesthetic encounter *becomes* commemorative.

In Chapter 3, 'Deference, deferred: rejourn as practice in familial war commemoration', Savage and Smith locate commemoration through a body of media ('original letters home and photographs, recorded personal testimony, documentary film and photographic re-tracings') that in its (re)presentation as an interactive installation (titled *The Birds That Wouldn't Sing*) 'invites the commemorative aura of ritual and the opportunity to participate in personal, family history as a memorial act which is gestural, iterative, partial and unresolved.' Their documenting (and re-documenting; re*journing*) of the experiences and journeys of Joan Prior, who served in the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS, commonly called 'Wrens') from 1944 to 1946 presents an articulation of commemorative praxis (this time through media) that echoes Newall's analysis of commemoration as deeply entrenched in the act of making, as well as distinctions made by Westerside that performance-as-commemoration, to use Savage and Smith's own words 'resists' by design, the 'orthodox liturgy' of public commemoration.

Part II, 'Staging History: Dramaturgy, Remembering, Forgetting', begins with Michael Pinchbeck's 'Making Bolero: Dramaturgies of Remembrance' a close examination of remembrance as a dramaturgical principle as understood through the analysis of *Bolero* (2014): a piece of multi-lingual performance which traverses the Bosnian War, the music of Maurice Ravel, and personal experiences of conflict. The chapter argues for a theatre in which 'the dialogue is the work', and a place to stage and collectively rebuild what was lost in the 'memoricide' undertaken by Serbian forces (a practice seen as recently as 2016 in the Iraqi city of Nimrud by Isis militants). For Pinchbeck, the theatre is a place to commemorate by building anew, by *doing*.

Donald Pulford, in Chapter 6, further articulates the idea of the theatre *as such* as a space and practice in which we might collectively commemorate the ideas, histories, narratives and peoples that have fallen on the impoverished (and brutal) side of history. With specific reference to Australia's 'ongoing anxiety […] concerning possession, loss and legitimacy', Pulford addresses Andrew Bovell's *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* (2001) in the context of the colonial legacies at the heart of contemporary Australian culture. A play that he describes as a 'corrective exorcism', *Holy Day…* reinforces a position 'that reconciliation cannot occur without acknowledging injury and loss'. In so doing, Pulford places theatre at the heart of our ethical relationship to history. Through the reading of *Holy Day…* as a commemorative act, Pulford picks up Hiro Saito's (2010) assertion that broadly received ideas of commemoration in the common cultural cache are ill-equipped to speak to or of those who are, or *have* 'lost'.

In Chapter 7, 'After Them, The Flood: Remembering, Performance and the Writing of History', Dan Ellin and Conan Lawrence find a dual-voice, of historian and performance-maker, respectively, to frame the relationship between performance and commemoration as encountered through the digital archiving work of the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) and the live and recorded performances that mark Lawrence's ongoing collaboration with the Royal Air Force. Ellin refers us to Christine McCarthy's notion of 'difficult heritage' to narrate how, through the use of performance in staging historical archives, we might find 'multiple voices to engage with the disparity between a dominant narrative of the war and [the] sectional narratives' that exist through and alongside it. Lawrence draws on the work of Nicolas

Bourriaud (alongside Derrida, Pearson, Schneider and others) to place acts of performance-as-commemoration not as fixed points in history, but as 'moment[s] in an infinite chain of contributors', recognising the temporal nature of commemoration insofar as it is (citing Hagerman) 'indebted to history while creating a new version of that history for present day consumption'. Indeed, between their two voices, Ellin and Lawrence sketch the commemorative as a kind of archive in-and-of-itself, producing new 'cartographies of knowledge' which—in the case of Bomber Command—breathes new life into the experiences of the lost and purposely forgotten.

Part III, 'Commemoration and Place: Architecture, Landscape and the Ocean', begins with Alexander Kelly's 'Cheers, Grandad!'. Kelly starts this personal account about how his work with Third Angel has made its own form of pilgrimage, its own performance of commemoration, by speaking of fragile memorials. He suggests that 'remembering is not something that is done just once. It is something that continues, whether publicly or privately'. He proposes that two of the company's shows, *The Lad Lit Project* (2005) and *Cape Wrath* (2013), have explored live performance's potential to memorialise. Both pieces feature personal stories about Kelly's grandfather and in writing this chapter, he configures their processes within a broader context to explore the ethics of working with other peoples' biographies, pilgrimage and loss.

In 'On Leaving the House: The Loss of Self and the Search for "The Freedom of Being" in The Wooster Group's *Vieux Carré*', Andrew Quick continues to excavate contemporary performance work for resonances between theatre and text. Here, he focuses on the character of The Writer in Tennessee Williams' novel *Vieux Carré* and how his writing process is akin to The Wooster Group's theatre making process in their recent adaptation of the text. He considers commemoration in terms of 'paying a certain debt to something', and, in so doing, considers performance *as such* as 'a commemorative act that is indebted to all the processes that led to its happening'. The writer, and the performance, then, are both *in debt*.

Finally, in 'The God, the Owner and the Master: Staging Rites of Passage in the Maritime Crossing the Line Ceremony', Lisa Gaughan situates the ritual that takes place on board vessels as they cross the equator as part performance, part memorial. Against the backdrop of maritime tradition, and making use of Marica Eliade's *Myth and Reality* (1963), Gaughan considers the commemorative here as walking a line between community-building and community-reinforcing,

between carnival and structure. By operating in those 'in-betweens', the chapter echoes the liminal state of the vessel it describes: in international waters—the Kingdom of Neptune—neither here nor there as it passes the equator. Commemoration at sea, appears as a way of fixing the unfixable, of finding ritual and comfort in the vastness of the ocean, far away from home.

The final part of the book, 'Eulogy, Memorial, Grief', turns our attentions to a series of highly personal and psychologically impactful reflections on loss. The first chapter speaks of the loss of collaborators in a devising process. 'Staging Absence and the (Un)making of Memory in *A Duet Without You*' explores Chloé Déchery's recent performance made with three collaborators who then left her to perform it on her own. *A Duet Without You* (2015) evokes a mournful *pas de deux*, a series of incomplete, conceptual duets in which we witness both a presence and an absence, a coming together and a taking apart. As Jacques Rancière wrote (after Mallarmé): 'Apart we are together, together we are apart' (Rancière 2009, 59). Déchery's piece sits on this dialectic axis between togetherness and apartness, belonging and longing, love and loss. As such, it sits in this publication as a eulogy to the creative process, and as a testament to its ephemerality. Peggy Phelan writes, 'performance's being… becomes itself through disappearance' (Phelan 1993, 146). Déchery's chapter makes its focus both the aesthetics and politics of absence that can haunt performance and its own making.

Disappearance is explored through another solo performance, *Time Piece*, by Louie Jenkins. 'Trace: Shame and the Art of Mourning' takes us through the process of making a performance work to mark the loss of a mother, a father and a partner. Each loss is reflected upon here with a lucid criticality that is perhaps only arrived at through the making of such performance work. Jenkins relates the piece to Barthes' *punctum* and describes ways in which it catalyses the 'shame-affect' or 'mourning-shame' that is sometimes taboo. They weave into this critical discourse the personal narrative of the piece and reflections on their own Queer identity as a lens through which to see loss.

The lens of the performance and of this chapter is photographic as the piece is themed around *Camera Lucida* to apply Barthes' theory to different ways of witnessing death. *Time Piece* is a direct address, both in its theatrical use of eye contact to engage the audience, and in its writerly deployment of the 'I' in its autobiographical performance-making, and Jenkins wrestles with the ethics of making this kind of live work to problematise the notion that grief disrupts.

An overwhelming sense of loss pervades Clare Parry-Jones' chapter, 'The Performative Ritual of Loss: Marking the Intangible', detailing as it does the death of children, and the increasing sense of loss felt by a parent in its wake. The wake is also that left by waves on the coast, waves that wash away with them intricate paper sculptures that Parry-Jones has made inspired by other cultures' traditions of mourning, especially the loss of a child. She draws a conceptual through-line from her own journey of grief to that of national loss, an environmental loss, and specifically the Fukushima nuclear incident in 2011. She writes about how '… boundaries between marking loss, acts of commemoration and performance become blurred' through her life and art. She also acknowledges, like Jenkins, the potential catharsis of this process of making 'fragile memorials' and notes that as Nichiren Daishonin wrote: 'Winter always turns to spring'. In doing so, she metaphorises her own loss.

Finally, Emily Orley presents us with a series of 27 fragments, the same number as there are bones in the human hand. 'Searching Shadows, Lighting Bones: Commemorative Performance as an Open-Ended Negotiation' offers a non-linear interweaving of both Orley's Grandfather's memoirs (found behind a filing cabinet) and John Berger's *Here is Where We Meet* (2006). It is a summoning, a séance of sorts, a recalling of auto-ethnographical, historical and personal narratives, a recounting of both a performance she made and what was left behind. The text was originally recorded onto vinyl, based on the idea that people had used discarded x-rays to make illicit replacement vinyl records in the Soviet Union in the 1940s and 1950s. Its fragmented style serves as an appropriate coda to our publication and creates a tangible sense of palimpsests from her own commemorative performance. Image and text, x-ray and skeleton, ghost and host, absence and presence, collide and echo through a series of poetic vignettes about loss, bound up in the ephemerality of its own telling and a narrative that is teetering between life and death. As Berger wrote, 'it is a world in which we risk to be lost' (1984, p. 50).

Fragments

On further reflection, the fragments in this chapter form the shape of the bones in the hands that hold this book. It is no coincidence that our dedication at the beginning speaks of leaves falling, we are deeply concerned with the materiality of this publication and how it too, in its own

way, is 'staging loss'. These chapters both commemorate performances and perform their own acts of commemoration, they reflect upon performances or rituals which are often ephemeral, in some cases, one-off unique events with a small audience. In bringing them together in this publication we seek to give them a new audience and a legacy beyond their lifetime. When Hemingway writes that 'Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees' (2004, p. 3) he is describing the tangible traces of soldiers who may never have come home. As James Phelan suggests:

> The passage establishes a contrast between the natural landscape without the troops (the river is "clear and swiftly moving and blue") and that landscape with the troops ("the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees") and it notes the disruption of nature's cycle by the troops ("and the leaves fell early that year"). Thus, despite the apparently objective description, the passage clearly conveys a negative judgement about the war. (Phelan 1990, p. 55)

Phelan goes on to explore Hemingway's narrator, Frederic Henry, as 'speaking from the time of the action' (1990, p. 56) and describes how

> The past tense… functions as narrative present, and the location of his perspective in space and time – at the window in the house in the village during the late summer and fall of "that year" – combine to orient us to his past rather than his current vision. (1990, p. 56)

Like Henry, the chapters that follow orient us towards the past through their current vision. They, like the raised dust from the boots of troops, leave their trace, and it is our hope that by bringing together these different perspectives on the staging of loss we have, in some way, contributed to the growing discourse around it. Our chapters draw on 100 years of history and take us into different theatrical contexts, from the site-specific to the theatre-based, from the ritual to the spectacle. Our aim has been to 'raise the dust' to leave a tangible trace of this work behind. When the Fukushima Nuclear tragedy took place in 2011, rescue workers sent robots into the abandoned site to recite death poetry to honour the victims. These robots were performing their own form of commemoration, staging their own loss, tracing the dust on the trees that this radioactive disaster left behind to be read by the future. As the Japanese poet, Bashō, wrote, within his canon of 16th Century death poems:

A scene
A hundred years old:
The garden in fallen leaves.

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PART I

This is not Re-enactment: Staging the Voices of the Dead

CHAPTER 2

There is Some Corner of a Lincolnshire Field…: Locating Commemoration in the Performance of *Leaving Home*

Andrew Westerside

The Beecheys

> I am thankful that he did not suffer long. Poor boy, he had been invalided twice and wounded once and we hoped he would come through. (Amy Beechey)

The story of the Beecheys, a Lincolnshire family who lived in the parish rectory of the small hamlet of Friesthorpe,[1] and the City of Lincoln itself, from the late nineteenth century through and beyond the events of the First World War (1914–1918), is at once both unique and heartbreaking. Against the backdrop of the Great War, where their tragedy takes place, the Beechey story is most rigorously told in Michael Walsh's *Brothers in War* (2006) through a composite of letters, interviews,

[1] Located roughly 14 km north-east of Lincoln.

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military records and archival journalism. The 'Beechey Brothers', the eight sons of Amy and Rev. Prince William Thomas Beechey, all participated in military service during the First World War across a broad geographical spread of postings and regiments that covered the Western Front, the Mediterranean and East Africa. Of the eight brothers who left home for war, only three returned, a single-family loss equalled only (at least on public record) by the Souls family of Great Rissington in Gloucestershire.

The eldest of the Beechey children,[2] Barnard (Sergeant, 2nd Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment), died in September 1915 aged 38 at the Battle of Loos in Northern France, approximately fifty kilometres west of the Belgian border. Second-eldest Charles (Private, 25th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers), died from wounds sustained during machine-gun fire in East Africa in 1917 (aged 39). Frank (Second Lieutenant, 13th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment, aged 30), Harold (Lance Corporal, 48th Battalion, Australian Infantry, A.I.F., aged 26) and Leonard (Rifleman, 18th Battalion, London Regiment (London Irish Rifles), aged 36) all fell during the Battle of the Somme. Christopher ('Chris') (Private, 4th Field Ambulance) who had joined the war—like his brother Harold—as an Anzac following their emigration to Australia in 1910, injured his spine falling down a ravine after taking a sniper bullet to the shoulder in Gallipoli. He, along with younger brothers Eric (posted as an army dentist in Malta and Salonika) and Sam (who joined for the final three weeks of the war aged 19, as a gunnery officer), were the only survivors.[3]

Along with the three surviving brothers, Barnard, Charles, Leonard, Frank and Harold were also *survived* by their mother Amy (their father had died of Cancer in 1912, before the outbreak of war) and their sisters Frances, Katherine, Margaret and Edith ('Edie').

[2] Amy and Rev. Prince William Thomas Beechey had a total of fourteen children, eight boys and six girls. In order of birth: Barnard (1887–1915); Charles (1878–1917); Maud (1879–1885, (aged 5) of measles); Leonard (1881–1917); Christopher (1883–1969); Frances (1885–1977); Frank (1886–1916); Eric (1889–1954); Harold (1891–1917); Katherine (1893–1971); Margaret (1894–1963); Winifred (1895–1976); Edith (1987–1992); and Samuel (1899–1977).

[3] While Chris survived the war, and lived to the age of 85 (1969), he was confined mostly to a wheelchair following repatriation to Australia.

Leaving Home

> The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to tell their story for them. (Miłosz 1955)

In 2013, in collaboration with Conan Lawrence (University of Lincoln), and with the support of Michael Hortin (BBC Radio Lincolnshire) and BBC North, I co-wrote and directed a large-scale site-specific performance, titled *Leaving Home*, with the aim of retelling, recalling and remembering the Beecheys' story on precisely the one-hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War: 4 August 2014.

The performance began in the centre of Lincoln, with its audience transported by coach from the city to northernmost point of Faldingworth Lane, a half-mile stretch of unspoilt country road that runs through the heart of Friesthorpe (and constitutes the hamlet's only significant road). On their 20-minute coach journey, news bulletins play over the coach's speaker system detailing the events of the period from 23 June 1914 (Franz Ferdinand's visit to Bosnia) to the afternoon of 4 August 1914 (David Lloyd George's morning request to Germany to respect Belgian neutrality and the formal declaration of war). Interspersed with the bulletins are diary-style monologues from each of the eight Beechey brothers, assembled in part from the content of their letters home to Amy, and to each other before the war, held by the Lincolnshire Archives.

On leaving the coach, the audience meet Amy, Edie, and Margaret Beechey, on their way to Friesthorpe to meet the rest of the family for a Bank Holiday Fete. As they walk and talk, they are accompanied by Frances and Sam, then (briefly) Leonard and Eric, on bicycles, who greet and joke with them before cycling on down the lane (Fig. 2.1). They pass (and wave at) Chris and Harold, working a field in the middle distance. Winifred ('Winnie') greets her mother and sisters from the front yard of a small farmhouse as they near Friesthorpe's modest heart, and as they round the final corner to the fete at the front of St. Peters, we find Charles, Katherine and Frank. Barnard, the eldest, and arrives disconcertingly late, presumed by his brothers to have been drinking. Seen as 'Act I' of *Leaving Home*, the journey from the edge of Faldingworth Lane is important for two reasons. First, we are introduced to the Beecheys in a tight physical and rhythmical choreography that allows the audience not only to encounter them as individual personalities, but also to see each of them in relation to Amy, their mother: her (loving) exasperation at Leonard and Eric's playfulness; pride in the industry and independence

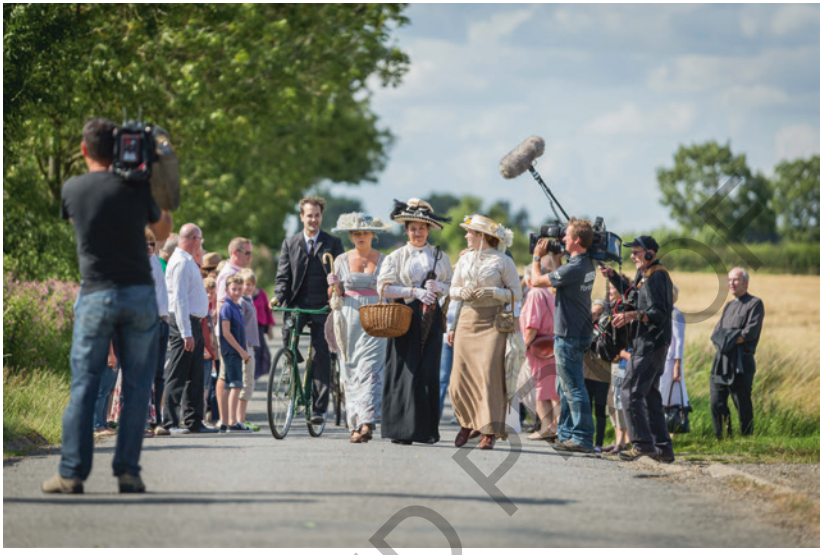

Fig. 2.1 On Faldingworth Lane, the audience follows Amy, Frances, and Margaret (joined by Leonard on a bicycle, who is about to steal Margaret's new hat) *Leaving Home* (2014)

of Chris and Harold; her blushes at Frank's flattery; her protectiveness of Sam, her youngest, and her recognition of the growing distance between her and her eldest sons, Charles and Barnard.

After refreshments at the fete, performers and audience are invited into St. Peter's for a warm and gentle sermon from the parish Vicar[4] re-dedicating the church bells, which were repaired and restored as part of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant that ran alongside the project.[5] The Vicar invites everyone to join in singing *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* (circa 1760), led by the women of the Royal Air Force Cranwell Military Wives Choir. The song is followed by Frances, who takes the pulpit to read Tennyson's *Ring Out, Wild Bells* (1850). The Vicar's following address is interrupted by—from outside the church—the Royal Anglian Regimental band, playing *The Grenadier*; a jaunty, somewhat

[4] Played by a performer, with blessing of the incumbent Vicar of St. Peter's.

[5] The restoration of the bells at St. Peter's marked the first time they had been rung in a century.

ostentatious military composition with all the hallmarks of great expeditions and shiny brass buttons. From here, time speeds up. The arrival of the band, and a recruiting sergeant with them, signals the start of war. When the brothers return to the church, they are in full military uniform as they prepare to leave for war.

Through *Leaving Home*, we wanted to interrogate (and perhaps develop practical methodologies for) the ways in which works of theatre and performance might exist *as commemorative acts.* Here, to *commemorate* the experience (rather than the life or death) of the Beechey family, to make performance-*as*-commemoration.

It was from this idea of the commemorative that *Leaving Home* became the start of a wider research project—led principally by practical inquiry—investigating the ways in which commemorative performance, or performance-*as*-commemoration might exist at the critical, practical, and cultural intersections of re-enactment, site-specific performance, memorial and anniversary.

In the early creative stages of *Leaving Home*, our critical imperatives were, naturally, much broader: as a researcher, I wondered how sited performance of this kind might articulate loss in the context of the Great War; how it might avoid what Anita Hagerman calls the draw towards an 'irresistible historical revisionism' (Hagerman 2010, p. 108) while at the same time acknowledging the 'live as vehicle for recurrence' (Schneider 2011, p. 29). I wondered how *Leaving Home* might tell the story of the Beechey family as a *commemorative* act, how it might recognise and articulate the difference between death and loss, and how it might find, in performing in Friesthorpe on 4 August 2014, a temporal co-location—historically, collectively and commemoratively—with 4 August 1914. I wondered how the site, the *land* of Friesthorpe, built around its thirteenth-century Church of St. Peter, might reconcile—in the moment of performance—that myriad of cultural, historical, geographic, personal and public intersections that emerge from the grand, nation-defining (and often homogenising) narratives of 1914–1918; then, with now; here with there; 1914, with 2014; this corner of a Lincolnshire field, with the battered and broken fields of the Western Front.

The critical dialogue of this chapter seeks to unpack those research imperatives and intersections and, in so doing, use the process, performance, and artefacts of *Leaving Home* to both provide and interrogate a critical definition of the practical field of performance-as-commemoration. It asks, in that attempt, the following questions:

- If commemorative performance is *not* re-enactment, *nor* memorial, *nor* a form of museum theatre, where precisely might we locate it within a broader mapping of performance practices?
- How might it be possible to critically distinguish between performances-*of* and performance-*as* commemoration?
- In what ways might performance provide structures/experiences of commemoration that resist the often idealised, often nation-building, and often patrilineal narratives of state-sanctioned, 'official' commemoration?

Insofar as this chapter might relate to both commemoration *and* loss, it was the *loss* of the five brothers—their felt absence from life, Lincolnshire, and home—rather than their *death*, that was at the heart of *Leaving Home's* story. Central too, then, were those left behind who *felt* that loss, that experienced the material and emotional absence of the brothers. Indeed, *Leaving Home* was very much *Amy's* story.

Locating Commemoration

At its heart, the idea of commemoration is an idea somewhat in conflict with itself. To commemorate is to 'officially' remember, to formalise memory for mass consumption, mass remembering; often, of a person or event. But if to commemorate is to 'officially remember', then it proposes, at one-and-the-same time, to operate on the collective and the individual simultaneously. It speaks, on the one hand, pastorally, to something generous, collective, shared, but, on the other, ominously, to something mandated, organised, pre-determined and immovable.

Émile Durkheim, an early and often-cited sociological thinker in the field of *ritual* and commemoration (practices which he saw as deeply and profoundly intertwined), understood commemoration as a means of 'generating group solidarity and collective identity through the distribution and enforcement of shared mnemonic schemas and objects' (Saito 2010, p. 631). This is evidenced no clearer, perhaps, than in the performance of public silence. From the ten-minute silence dedicated by the Portuguese Senate following the death of José Paranhos in 1912,[6] to South Africa's 'Three Minute Pause', to the two minutes

[6] Notable here as the first recorded public silence in Western history.

of silence performed throughout the commonwealth on Armistice Day, in the public silence we find a 'mnemonic schema' that allows memory to be encoded and organised: a *reminder* to *remember*. In the case of mnemonic *objects*, we need look no further than the use of the 'Remembrance Poppy' in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to call to memory—*via* John McCrae's poem *In Flanders Fields* (1915)—the fallen of war.

Indeed, in both the public silence and the (wearing of the) poppy, what we encounter are performances *of* commemoration. Here, the performance/performative is a signifier. In the case of the former, silence functions as an *index* of commemoration—evidence, as it were, that something (the commemorative *act*) has happened; for the latter, the poppy is a *symbol*, and again is *not* the commemoration, but rather a marker on its trail. In *Leaving Home*, the question, put in semiotic terms, was whether or not performance could operate beyond the level of signifier.

Yet, Durkheim's conception of the commemorative, as Hiro Saito notes, is only well equipped 'in the case of "positive events"—for example, the attainment of political independence or a clear-cut military victory—events that generate collective effervescence and reinforce desirable images of collective identity' rather than those which 'present moral ambiguities and controversies', where their 'rituals do not resolve but rather preserve and even foreground' those complexities and ambiguities (Saito 2010, p. 631). Indeed, contestations of the Remembrance Poppy are concerned not with the poppy *as such*, but instead at the way in which 'commemorative rituals have been deployed historically as cultural technologies for imagining the nation' (ibid., 636). That such deployments are possible is precisely because, as a symbol, its connection to the thing signified is culturally determined.

In a sympathetic reading, commemoration is a carving out of public space, place or time that makes or clears way for the personal. It is a kind of shared subjectivity, a moment of communal pause, and like rituals, is defined by 'occasions that combine a high degree of mutual focus of attention, that is, a high degree of intersubjectivity, together with a high degree of emotional entrainment … [which] result[s] in feelings of membership that are attached to cognitive symbols' (Collins 2004, p. 42). The social bonds and groups that arise around commemorative acts, proposes Saito, do not prefigure commemoration, but are instead 'constituted *through* commemoration' (Saito 2010, p. 630). Indeed, we

might say that these social groups, here bound by a kind of 'collective memory' (ibid.), are not too dissimilar—ontologically speaking—from that complex notion of 'audience'.

Yet, with the exception of Andrea Cossu's work drawing links between Durkheim's conception of 'commemorative rites' and performance theory (2010), and Johanna Schmitz's exploration of 'commemorative acts of reception' (2016) in site-specific performances of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, there is little in the way of theatre and performance studies research that reads or renders acts of performance *as* commemoration, and less still ones that attempt to produce critically rigorous elucidations of commemorative performance as a field of practice unique to itself.[7] Sociologist, Debra Marshall, notes that it is 'Films, television documentaries, exhibitions, the release of government papers, campaigns for the pardon of deserters and public recognition of a wider range of wartime activities [that] form the bedrock on which contemporary British war remembrance rests.' They are, with no mention at all of theatre and performance (and perhaps more tellingly, the *live* or *ephemeral*), 'bound into a matrix with remembrance rituals […] and their impact on our memories and landscapes incorporate remembrance into the fabric of our everyday worlds' (Marshall 2004, p. 37).

Anita Hagerman writes fluently about the cultural 'persistence of commemoration' in her analysis of history cycles (primarily Shakespearean) in post-war Britain (Hagerman 2010, p. 114). In doing so, she articulately frames 'the process by which the history plays became particularly attractive sites of theatrical nation-making [as] an anthropological one in which performance is used to legitimize a national ideal' (ibid., 108). But even Hagerman, who has perhaps come closest to drawing the notion of the commemorative away from what we might think of as its sibling or most closely connected forms (re-enactment, history plays, museum theatre, site-specific memorial), recycles the term as a kind of synonym for plays and performances that are

[7] Studies of commemoration, with regard to broader cultural and historical scholarship, are decisively more widespread. From commemoration in medieval cultures (Guerry), Israeli Holocaust commemoration (Zandberg) and the commemoration of 9/11 (Neal), to McDowell and Braniff's work on commemoration, conflict and peace processes (2014) and Andrew Jones' work on memory and commemoration via the study of material cultures (2007), there is substantial critical work already undertaken on the subject of both commemoration *as such* and in relation to specifically bounded historical events.

infinitely repeatable, plays and performances which can be called upon or 'paraded', as the need arises, to provide allegorical or metaphorical commentaries that might quell or incite crises of national, moral, or spiritual identity; cultural or party politics.

Rebecca Schneider, in her seminal *Performing Remains* (2011), writes in meticulous detail about the practice of re-enactment. From the perspective of standing witness to (mostly) US Civil War re-enactments over a decade, she notes the importance of time (both perceived and actual) to the ways in which re-enactment 'makes' itself, and makes meaning:

> Indeed, the sense that the past is a so-called future direction in which one can travel – that it can stretch out before us like an unfamiliar landscape waiting to be (re)discovered – is familiar. It is also one of the basic logics of psychoanalytic trauma theory that events can lie both before and behind us – in the past where an event may have been missed, forgotten, or not fully witnessed, and in the future where an event might (re)occur as it is (re)encountered, (re)discovered, (re)told and/or (re)enacted, experienced for the first time only as second time. (Schneider 2011, p. 22)

In this way, both Hagerman and Schneider's constructions of the history play and the re-enactment, respectively, find some overlaps with *Leaving Home*. But where Hagerman is concerned with how these dramas might speak to or create a space for the (re)making of national identity, and Schneider with an application of the '(re)' that permits events to somehow shortcut their own temporality, *Leaving Home* was about (if it can be 'about' anything) the ways in which loss—on an industrial, mechanical, international scale—manifests at home. In Schneider's temporality of re-enactment, however—both before and behind us—lies perhaps the most readable relationship between the performed 'ritual' of commemorative acts and the ways in which live performance might manifest *as* commemoration.

Structures of Commemoration

> And yet, if theater refuses to remain, it is precisely in the repeatedly live theater or installation space that a host of recent artists explore history – the recomposition of remains. (Schneider 2001, p. 100)

> Rituals, including commemorative ones, are by definition repeated over time to maintain participants' schemas of thinking and feeling about the

> world, and acting in it. This reiterative nature of commemorative rituals dovetails with the character of memory itself – better understood as a reiterative process than a static thing or state. (Saito 2010, p. 634)

As Saito reveals on the subject of 'reiterated commemoration' (ibid.), there is an explicit understanding that the commemorative act is (like Schneider's Civil War re-enactments, and Hagerman's History Cycles) infinitely repeatable. And, while the composition of the schemas of commemoration may undergo minor changes and evolutions as older cohorts make way for younger ones (reminiscent of what Schneider calls the 'recomposition of remains') (2001, p. 100), the central scaffolding of commemoration nevertheless remains the same: *this* place, at *this* time, in this *way*. In fact, it is a combination of these three elements—spatiality, temporality, and theatricality—that gives form to the commemorative event. For theatre and performance to *be* an act of commemoration, then, requires a reconciliation between the received notion of performance's ephemerality (and thus its resistance to certain understandings of repetition), and the need for a *re*-iterative process which forms the 'collective memory' that commemoration produces.

If such a reconciliation might be possible, that is, if performance can function as-performance *and* as-commemoration, then it follows that such a dualism can be understood through those interactions between spatiality (place), temporality (both when and—following Schneider—*who*-when), and theatricality (mnemonic product): *what* is performed/commemorated, *when*, and *where*.[8] The significance of the first, that is, the *subject* of commemoration, pertains to both Hagerman's observation of performances being made (or co-opted) 'to legitimize a national ideal' (Hagerman 2010, p. 108) and Saito's assertion that a Durkheimian understanding of the commemorative is ill-equipped to contend with foci that might trouble or destabilise the politics of national identity that commemoration so often plays out.

Unlike the two-minute silence of Armistice Day, or the laying of a wreath at The Cenotaph, Whitehall, on Remembrance Sunday (both performances *of* commemoration, which call collectively towards

[8]There is a clear resonance here between this and what Clifford McLucas (in relation to the work of Mike Pearson and Brith Gof called a 'placeevent', where 'a place and what is built there bleed into each other and constitute another order of existence' (McLucas in Kaye 2000, 56).

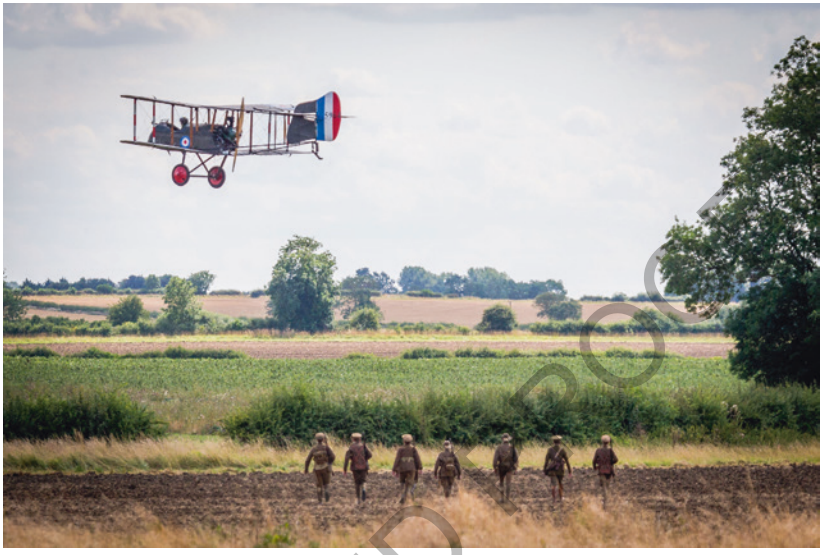

Fig. 2.2 The 'Beechey Boys' leave for war. *Leaving Home* (2014)

(commemorate) the dead fallen in battle), almost nothing of *Leaving Home* was concerned with the moment(s) of conflict that the eight Beechey brothers might have experienced during their wartime service. In the penultimate sequences of both the Friesthorpe and Arboretum versions of *Leaving Home*, we see the eight brothers 'leave home' for the war.

In Friesthorpe, the eight Beechey brothers walk across a ploughed field on the hamlet's south-western edge, accompanied by the Band of the Royal Anglian Regiment, and a lone piper. As they begin to fade from view, an Airco. DH.2 (WWI fighter aircraft) flies low (approximately 50 feet) above and across their line, spinning up its 7.7 mm front-mounted Lewis Gun (Fig. 2.2). Buried in the long-grass at the entrance to the field are small wireless speakers, which gently introduce a spatially composed soundscape of boots marching, artillery, and machine-gun fire. Eventually, the brothers disappear between the gaps in the hedgerows, and after a short sequence between Amy and the sisters at the field's edge, followed by five peals from the bell at St. Peter's, the three surviving brothers (Chris, Eric, and Sam) return across the uneven land, Eric and Sam supporting their unsteady elder brother. The audience,

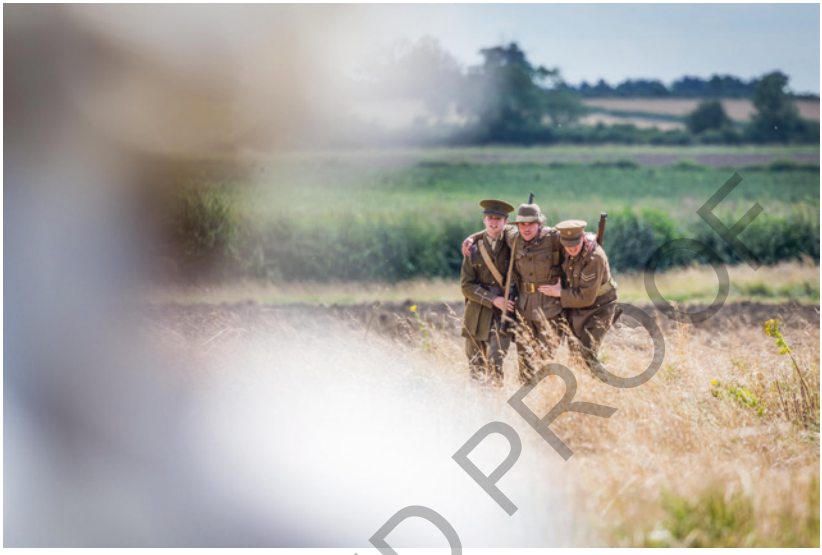

Fig. 2.3 Chris, Eric, and Sam Beechey return from the Great War. In the foreground, their mother, Amy. *Leaving Home* (2014)

who have to this point followed the Beechey family (both narratively and on foot) through an August Bank Holiday fete, a church service, a hasty recruitment, and now a departure to war, watch the brothers' return from over the shoulder (and through the eyes) of Amy Beechey (Fig. 2.3).

With regard to how performance might reconcile itself with the ritualistic encodings and repetitive demands of commemoration, it is crucial that in this sequence what is commemorated—what is *remembered*, what is *staged*—is not the death of the five brothers who do not return across the field, it is instead the lived artefact of their death, *Amy's loss.* In this space for 'collective memory', the performance commemorates *not only* our memories (or indeed memories of memories) of the Great War, but of personal loss *as such.* In this way, *Leaving Home* did not seek to formalise or reinforce an accepted sculpting of national identity through the frame of WWI or the battlefields of the Somme, but instead reflected a 'desire to recover and reprocess' (Little 2015, p. 44) through the act of performance.

The explicit theatricality of this sequence, like commemoration *vis a vis* the ritual, is composed in such a way that it might affect in its audience the 'high degree of emotional entrainment'[9] that Collins argues produces the feelings of kinship and social bonding that results from commemorative acts. Such theatricality is, in-and-of-itself, unproblematic for the dramaturgy of *Leaving Home*. With eight individual Beechey stories spread across the four years of WWI, and thousands of miles of land and sea between them, their *ensemble* exit provides a compositional simplicity which neatly compresses their individual stories without disturbing the audience's focus from Amy, who is here, now, with us. Indeed, that the eight Beechey brothers cross this one, emblematic field, together (which, of course, they never did); that it recasts their individual chronologies in order to stage Amy's loss (Barnard, Charles, Leonard, Frank and Harold were all dead by the time Sam entered the war) is unproblematic from the perspective of performance precisely because it is *not* re-enactment, nor ritual, nor commemorative of a particular battle or battlefield.

Writing on trauma and performance, Suzanne Little notes (in relation to a shift in Holocaust and memory studies) that 'testimony is no longer considered to be that which delivers facts (invariably blurred over time), but that which *affectively* testifies to the past through transmitting or bearing the emotions, sensations and psychological imprints of traumatic experience' (Little 2015, p. 47). It is this, the 'emotions, sensations and psychological imprints' (ibid.) of trauma—Amy's trauma, the trauma of loss—that *Leaving Home* commemorates. The five (now absent) brothers become (or are produced through the performance *as*) affective 'mnemonic schema' for *all* the dead, *our* dead. But like the brothers, the performers do not walk this field over and over, there is no next performance, no *again*. Those who are not returning do not return. After their performance they are gone as the brothers were gone, in *this* performance and in perpetuity, because *Leaving Home* will not happen again. And if this is the case, we must first turn to *Leaving Home*'s relationship to temporality in order to understand how it might resist the *re*iterative impulses of the commemorative.

[9] I read Collins' entrainment here as somewhere between entrapment (as it would be defined in engineering) and as a synchronisation to an external rhythm (as in biomusicology).

There and then; Here and Now

> Within this chaotic postmodern jungle thrives a hardy and abundant weed – mundane, nearly useless, adaptable to almost any context, and possessing an inherent ability to replicate forever. I am referring to that hoary benchmark of journalism and scholarship, the anniversary. In celebrating anniversaries, we celebrate the one element of history that can be predicted with dead-on certainty. (Murphy 2001, p. 156)

If commemoration at its most rudimentary is to call to the collective memory, and further, that memory itself is 'an act of remembering or a moment of recollection that always involves reconstruction of past experiences' (Saito 2010, p. 634), then to insist that it is the commemorative *act* which must repeat or reappear is also to align commemoration so closely with ritual that it fails to exist as a cultural practice separate from those with which it intersects. But if the commemorative form can be articulated as the interactions between spatiality, temporality, and theatricality, then it might also be the case that the *re*iterative component of a commemoration—the thing which repeats and is *recognisably* repeated—need not be the theatrical/ritual act.

Such a formulation would also serve to draw clearer distinctions between performances-*of* and performances-*as* commemoration. In the case of the former, the ritual/act is *necessarily* the thing repeated because it is through that repetition that a group finds its constituency—it *has* to be *you* that performs silence, that receives communion, that rounds the maypole—it is in the act of doing (of performing) that those 'social bonds' are formed. Moreover, in the performance *of* commemoration, the technical competency or affective nuances of those performances are of little concern; it will suffice that they are readable and translatable, with a modicum of fidelity present in their repetition.[10] But *Leaving Home,* by contrast, was only ever imagined as a once-performed, complex theatrical event with performers cast for their particular skills and qualities as performers. As a result, it is not simply that the commemoratively constituted group do not have the 'ownership' of the ritual, it is that it was never meant to *be* owned at all. It makes no attempt to apologise for its ephemerality because it is anchored to the world and thus the

[10]The performance of the naval 'Crossing the Line' ceremony, discussed by Gaughan in Chapter 10, presents itself as a useful illustration of this idea.

impulse to *re*-iterate by the date on which it was performed—the anniversary of the outbreak of war.

> And yet, for all the skepticism, something in the human psyche responds naturally and without demurrer to the idea of anniversaries. One type of evidence for this, though it might be dismissed as "anecdotal" by critics, is the evidence of our eyes and ears: the crowds that gather with candles in Central Park every December 8 to mark the death of John Lennon; the restiveness among Serb nationalists every June 15, the anniversary of Serbia's devastating defeat by the Turks at the battle of Kosovo, in 1389. (Murphy 2001, p. 158)

The vision of commemoration presented by Murphy, with anniversary (and place) at its foreground, is one which also demonstrates how commemorative acts might exist outside of the regulatory and homogenising power of the state or 'liturgical commemoration' (Wolterstorff 2018). In neither Central Park nor Kosovo does a candle-lit gathering or a collective restlessness perform a universalising or 'official' narrative built on the back of a commemorative event. Nor would either of those stagings lose their affective potency (I would suggest) by being 'one-off' events insofar as they already demonstrate their relationship to broader commemorative registers. In both cases, so strong is the relationship between place and its attendant 'sociology of time' (ibid.) that whatever occurs *in* that window of time is invested with the 'mutual focus of attention [and] high degree of intersubjectivity' that renders it an act commemorative in spite of its inevitable disappearance; as Schneider notes: 'absent flesh ghosts bones' (Schneider 2001, p. 104).

That same logic thus applies to *Leaving Home*. That it will not (and did not) *happen again* does not preclude it from functioning *as*-commemoration. Perhaps this is also the case precisely *because* it did not seek to perform the kinds of 'official' historical narrative that require an annual tracing-over to ritually engrave them in the public psyche. There was no desire, by means of repeated (reiterative) inscription, to produce and then *enforce* a *de facto* version of the Beechey story or British narratives of the Great War (this provides further separation, too, from Hagerman's understanding of the socio-political function of the history play).

In order to examine the third part of the commemorative relationship—spatiality—it will be helpful to first turn to Jerome De Groot's *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Popular Culture* (2009):

> Historical documentary's emphasis on site – the presenter being in the actual spot, the real place – demonstrates a cultural move to the importance of location. The psychogeographic presumption that being somewhere can address a connection between then and now, or that location emphasises empathy, argues that visitors to the location themselves become re-enactors of a sort, desiring a physical linkage between themselves and the past. While ostensibly literary and intellectual history, Peter Ackroyd's *The Romantics* (BBC2, 2006) […] relied on presenter narration onsite, interspersed with reconstruction and some CGI images. The location-specific element of the series is fundamental to its mise-en-scène, and the importance of place in these films suggests that the physical heritage site is still fundamental to our understanding of history. (De Groot 2009, p. 114)

As De Groot (2009) identifies, there is an increasingly prevalent relationship in popular culture and media between the retelling or recalling of historical events and the ground or land they occurred on—what he calls, the 'real place' (ibid.). But in the case of historical documentary, the presence of the 'real place' in its *mise-en-scène* might be best understood as a means of co-opting place in order to corroborate, or solidify the veracity of, a particular reading of an historical moment.

In acts of performance-*as*-commemoration, by contrast, the importance of the 'real place' can be understood through the way in which place *remains* in ways that (the ephemeral act of) performance *cannot*. In this, the comparative permanence of place, ground or land is the base on to which an ephemeral, non-reiterated, act of commemoration can inscribe itself. Place, unlike the theatre or black box—which by its very design wipes clean the traces of the work that occurs inside it—holds and assimilates the acts and events that take place in it; the act of walking transforms the ground. As Dee Heddon observes of our relationship to place in *Autobiography and Performance* (2007): 'it is the memories of a place that perform the lure of the local, serving to remind us where we have been and what we have done, which in turn brings us back to a sense, not of place, but of ourselves' (Heddon 2007, pp. 95–96).

And so, in the same way that commemoration as 'collective memory' speaks at once to the communal and the personal, so place speaks to what has occurred *in it*, and from the memory *of it*. In remembering Friesthorpe, on 4 August 2014, we are called (*via* performance) to Friesthorpe on 4 August 1914. As the performers—as the Beecheys—(re)tread the roads and fields that the Beechey family trod a century before, they are the ghost to Pearson's host—part of a 'co-existence

of a number of narratives and architectures, historical and contemporary' (Taylor 1997, p. 96). What the performance opens up, and where Heddon's analysis is so crucial in understanding performance's relationship to the commemorative, is that engaging with *this* place, at this *time*, through *this* story, brings us back to a sense 'of ourselves' (Heddon 2007, p. 96).

Leaving Home, then (as a model for performance-as-commemoration) can be defined not as re-enactment, memorial, or a form of museum theatre, but as a kind of commemorative event that belongs to the people and places (and memories of people and places) that have no home in the triumphant or performedly sombre commemorations of national identity. If a critical distinction between performances of and performances-as-commemoration is possible at structural level, it is found in the ways in which performance-as-commemoration does not co-opt the affective 'machine'[11] of theatre and performance to reiterate those narratives, but rather embraces its fragility and disappearance to generate bespoke, 'unsanctioned' experiences that emerge for and of the places and times that they inhabit.

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[11] I am called to mind here, with specific relation to the idea of the 'machine', of Adam Alston's work on immersive theatre. In that particular field, he persuasively argues for performance (by developing an idea from American analytic philosopher Robert Nozick), as:

> experience machines […] enclosed and other-worldly spaces in which all the various cogs and pulleys of performance – scenography, choreography, dramaturgy and so on, coalesce around a central aim: to place audience members in a thematically cohesive environment that resources their sensuous, imaginative and explorative capabilities as productive and involving aspects of a theatre aesthetic. (Alston 2016, p. 2)

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CHAPTER 3

Deference, Deferred: Rejourn as Practice in Familial War Commemoration

Karen Savage and Justin Smith

Introduction

This chapter examines the gestation of a film/performance multimedia project entitled *The Birds That Wouldn't Sing* (2017) that draws on the experiences of Joan Prior, who served in the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), through war-torn Europe between 1944 and 1946. It culminates in an account of an interactive installation that models new ways in which family history and personal testimony of war might coalesce into performance of, and *as* (manifestations of) commemoration. Using maps, photographs, letters home, oral testimony and re-told memories, we reconstruct a personal narrative of war recorded in Joan's everyday experience. Following in her footsteps our exploration, documented on film, forms another sedimentary layer of memory, made of fragments and traces, echoes and ghosts. Although Joan's living

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memories have now receded behind a veil of dementia, in our reverse process her losses fade to be replaced by that which is rediscovered, repositioned, reimaged and re-imagined. Thus, in our layered history, we reconstitute a personal past from a variety of partial evidence, through the perspective of a mother's memorial legacy to her son (Justin Smith), framed in the deep-focus of a film-maker's lens (Karen Savage).

In September 1942, at the age of 19, Joan Prior joined the WRNS ('Wrens') as a Writer. After basic training at Mill Hill Barracks in North London she was selected, as an already experienced shorthand-typist, to work for the Allied Naval Command Expeditionary Force (ANCXF) under Admiral Bertram Ramsay, on the planning and execution of Operation Neptune, the seaborne invasion of occupied France which took place on D-Day (6 June 1944). She was stationed first in London, at Norfolk House, St James's, then at Southwick Park near Portsmouth.

After the heavy casualties suffered by the Canadian landing troops in the Dieppe Raid of 19 August 1942, attributed by some, in part, to a security breach, the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, insisted on ANCXF employing a WRNS secretariat. They were, he said, 'the only birds that wouldn't sing'.[1]

Commander Kenneth Edwards, author of *Operation Neptune* (1946), wrote of these WRNS: 'I knew of no instance of even the smallest lapse of security in spite of the fact that the majority of them had access to all TOP SECRET papers from the beginning' (Edwards 1946, p. 104). Ramsay's biographer, Rear-Admiral W. S. Chalmers shared this opinion: 'Integrity was a tradition of this fine women's Service, and there was never the smallest lapse of security either in conversation or at work' (Chalmers 1959, p. 209).

Following the invasion, in September 1944, Ramsay's team travelled through France in the wake of the Allied advance. Landing via the Mulberry Harbour at Arromanches (north-western France), they first occupied an austere hilltop fortification at Granville, before moving to the grander Chateau d'Hennemont at St Germain-en-Laye, north of

[1] Of the 5000 Canadian troops landed at Dieppe in what was a raid designed to assess the German defences of the French coast and trial the strategy for a large-scale amphibious assault, 907 were killed, 2460 were wounded and 1874 were taken prisoner. 'Looking back', Churchill later reflected, 'the casualties of this memorable action may seem out of proportion to the results'. But, he judged, 'it was a costly but not unfruitful reconnaissance in force' (Churchill 1951, p. 7968).

Paris. It was near here that Ramsay and a number of his senior officers were killed in an aircraft accident in January 1945. After VE Day, 8 May 1945, ANCXF, now under the command of Admiral Burrough, entered Germany, and established their headquarters at Minden, Westphalia. Joan Prior, now a Leading Wren and, by the end of the year the recipient, with her 'oppo'[2] Phyllis (Ginge) Thomas, of the British Empire Medal, completed her service there in 1946.

After the war, 'Ramsay's Wrens', as they became known, kept in touch and reunited annually during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1984, the 40th anniversary of D-Day was marked by the production, under the auspices of the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth, of a short documentary, to which several of the team, including Joan, contributed. Ten years later saw the much larger, 50th anniversary commemorations, involving events in London, Dover, Portsmouth and Normandy. In 2004, Joan returned to France, 60 years on. Now in her 80s, this was likely to be her last opportunity to revisit the scenes of her wartime exploits. For practical reasons, this trip was limited to Caen, Arromanches, and Granville.

Because the visit of 2004 had been limited in scope, and with Joan's increasing infirmity ruling out further ventures, the authors decided to embark on a larger-scale re-tracing of the journey of Ramsay's Wrens from Paris to Minden, in the summer of 2011. Equipped with maps, Joan's original photographs and letters home, and her handed-down memories, we filmed our process as both an exploration-by-proxy of her experience and a familial commemorative act by a son in respect of (and for) his mother. Part homage, part voyage of discovery, our aim was to relocate her journey in time and space, albeit our own.

Commemorative events have always been important loci for the gathering, sharing and re-telling of personal memory and family history. But journeys of recollection, like pilgrimages to war graves, are another kind of unofficial, expressive act of memorialisation which have their own procedures and affects. The process of 'rejourn' explored here, involves the idea of a **return** journey (both physical and temporal) informed by **referring** to Joan's anecdotes and artefacts (as **referents**), in a purposeful act of commemoration.[3] But the term rejourn also means to put off,

[2] British Military slang for 'best friend'.

[3] For our purposes, we are making a noun of the verb to 'rejourn', which has itself three related meanings as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*: (i) to postpone, defer; (ii) to return (to a place); and (iii) to refer (a person) to something. 'rejourn, v.'.

to **postpone**. It refers to that which is, in a Derridean sense, constantly **deferred** (Derrida 1973, p. 82). As our experience revealed, this third aspect of the term became increasingly apparent in our journey of discovery. The sites of memory we revisited were also occasions of continual slippage, approximate locations that we could not adequately triangulate by reference to Joan's evidence, spatio-temporal *données* that forever eluded our grasp. This unsatisfactory mapping meant that our quest for locating memory was always put off, never resolved.

This chapter, then, traces a dual process of contraflow in the realm of family memory. Firstly, the source memories of experience (Joan's) fade, both diminishing in quality and reliability through repetition and re-telling (as a reproduced audio-visual recording becomes degraded through copying), and ultimately disappearing as her grasp of language deteriorates into incomprehensibility. Secondly, and conversely, the legacy of mediated artefacts (those tablets on which memories are inscribed and handed down through the familial line) accrues. Although these accounts (original letters home and photographs, recorded personal testimony, documentary film and photographic re-tracings etc.) are partial, subjective and impressionistic, together they constitute a body of media as a 'memory repository'. This is an archive that replaces first-hand memory in an inherited and ongoing process of recuperation and commemoration. This is a body of media not unlike the 'memorial books' 'devoted to the memory of individual destroyed communities' referred to by Marianne Hirsch (2012a, p. 246).[4] Our filmed document is a commemoration of a relationship between mother and son, contextualised within a past narrative—a time when Joan's memories were clear and could be retrieved, 'evoking life as it was before' (ibid.). In this sense then, the artefacts accrued on our journey are, like the memorial books, 'acts of witness and sites of memory … where subsequent generations can find a lost origin, where they can learn about the time and place they will

OED Online. March 2018. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/161756?redirectedFrom=rejourn. Accessed 20 April 2018.

[4] 'Following the pogroms in the early part of this century, a Jewish memorial tradition developed among diasporic communities…The *yizker bikher*, or memorial books, prepared in exile by survivors of Pogroms were meant to preserve the memory of their destroyed cultures' (Hirsch 2012a, p. 246). Hirsch goes on to explain that the Nazi genocide survivors continued this practice.

never see' (Hirsch 2012a, pp. 246–247). Our process of learning about lost time and place was shaped by a route on a map, thwarted attempts to locate landmarks from Joan's photographs and letters, and chance discoveries of unexpected memorial signifiers. In situating ourselves in these locations, our presence cast shadows over the memories of those who had travelled before us. In this way, our relationship to these locations became a performative act of imaginative orientation (in time and space) that we recorded on film.[5] Our filmed work *documents*, but is not in a conventional sense, a documentary.

Journey and Rejourn

Joan Prior's leaving of Paris had been chaotic and its route, following that of the Allied advances into Germany, circuitous.

> *17th June 1945*
>
> *My Dear Mum, Paddy, Bessie and Stan*
>
> *Well, here I am at long last settling down to write and let you have all the gen. It's Sunday and I'm feeling so worn out and tired, but still must drop you a line or you'll be wondering where on earth I am.*
>
> *To start with we started off on Tuesday morning, 12th June and we were to go by bus to Le Bourget aerodrome just north of Paris and from there to fly to Germany. Well, we were up bright and early on Tuesday – about 6 o'clock I seem to remember – and packed up our bedding etc. At 7am all our bedding and suitcases went into a waiting truck and were whizzed off to Germany by road leaving us with just a small case with washing gear and sleeping things in it. Ginge and I also retained our duffel coats and travelling rugs just in case – and later on we were thankful we had done this.*
>
> *Well, we had breakfast and then headed for Le Bourget. Having got there, it had started to tip with rain and the sky was looking so stormy and thundery and after waiting about half an hour we were told that there would be no more flying that day so back we went to Quarters.*

[5] As a performative act, similar to the way that Janet Cardiff's photographic interventions in landscape transform the surroundings. Works with recollections, using 'photographs as a device to convey a sense of both history and memory'. http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/takingpictures.html. Accessed 17 December 2017.

We had lunch at Quarters and then Ginge and I went into Paris. We went to the cinema in the afternoon and saw Fred MacMurray and Madeleine Carroll in "Honeymoon in Bali" which was very good indeed and then after supper at the YWCA we went to the Canada Club dancing in the evening. Well, that was our last night in Paris and it nearly broke my heart to leave. I don't know when I've minded leaving a city so much. Well, that was that and we trekked back to Quarters and slept on the boards that night. That was when we were glad we'd got our rugs and duffels because boards have a way of getting hard and cold after a time! The next day we set off in the bus once more and went to the Chateau to pick up the Wren officers for the trip. We arrived there and were told once more no flying so back to the Quarters and there we hung about till lunch-time when after a hurried lunch we were told we were not now flying but going by road. So, once more into the busses we piled, picked up the Wren officers and the stewards and started off.

We went north through France, and into Belgium, through Mons and several other big towns and so to Brussels. We arrived there at half past eleven at night and slept in the Church Army Hostel. After breakfast there we set out on the road again at 8am and went north through Belgium across the frontier and into Holland. The damage in the Dutch towns is pitiful and the people are all starving. Honestly it's ghastly when you think of the people at home now grumbling because the busses may not run to time or because they've to queue for food. Those people would love the chance to queue all day if there was any food at the end of it!

We went through a town which was called Venlo. I say was, because it just doesn't exist any more. Then we crossed the German Frontier and crossed the Rhine. Actually for all I'd heard of its beauty I was disappointed as the place where we crossed it was quite uninteresting. It was just a very wide stretch of even water with flat land each side of it. I s'pose it's further south that it winds through hilly wooded country with castles on its banks. Anyway that over we went through one German town after another and it would do your hearts good to see the damage inflicted by the RAF and the Americans. Not one German town or village that we passed through – and we went through a good many – had escaped. All had suffered in some degree or another and most were worse than anything England has ever seen. One town called Osnabruck just doesn't exist any more. There were only two houses which were habitable in the whole of that town and it wasn't a small place by any means! Munster too, was badly damaged and so eventually, at about half-past nine we arrived at our destination Minden.[6]

[6]All extracts from the letters of Joan Prior are published here with the permission of the estate of Joan Halverson Smith, © Malcolm Smith and Justin Smith.

The 2011 route, as a re-tracing of Joan Prior's footsteps, abandoned geographical fidelity to the original journey primarily for practical reasons. Entering Germany directly through Belgium avoided an unnecessary detour into Holland which only the circumstances of the Allied advance of 1944–1945 had required. However, the rejourn was also enriched by its passage through earlier sedimentary layers of Europe's war memorials, whilst Joan's journey had been understandably preoccupied with the immediate surface of the terrain: bomb damage, devastation, refugees. Striking north-east from Paris for Flanders we encountered the German war cemetery at Malmaison, and the First World War memorials of Mons. In fact, our departure from St Germain-en-Laye had begun at a graveside: the well-kept cemetery down the hill gives over one short neat flank to the unmistakable simplicity of white Allied headstones marking the graves of Admiral Ramsay and his fellow crew. In this way, our journey was not guided by topography but, rather, inspired by the touchstones of commemorative sites, some of which predated World War II. Moreover, Joan's letter is as much about the leaving of Paris as the journey into Germany. The Chateau d'Hennemont, the town of St Germain-en-Laye, and Paris itself had formed concentric social boundaries of intense emotional experience: excitement and fear, duty and pleasure, camaraderie and solitude, love and hatred, the weight of war and the levity of play. Similarly, whilst her partisan position was determined by the circumstances and ideology of war, our journey, as modern Europeans, was not thwarted by the physical and political obstacles of conflict or the negotiation of geographical borders. In fact, our tribulations were both more prosaic and philosophical.

In our film, we locate the chateau and attempt to record the space where Joan had taken pictures in the snow. However, the red-brick, castellated house, instantly recognisable from her photographs, proved impenetrable to us. It is now an international school and was closed and deserted for the summer holidays. It was mute, impassive and devoid of life. It seemed the very opposite, in the pallid summer sunshine, of the animated scenes it had witnessed in the harsh winter of 1944. We could not get close enough in time or space to find the memories in its masonry, the echoes of the past beneath its portico. Hirsch reminds us that 'The punctum of time is precisely that incongruity or incommensurability between the meaning of a given experience, object, or image *then,* and the one it holds *now*' (Hirsch 2012b, p. 63).

Fig. 3.1 (©2018, Karen Savage and Justin Smith)

We soon learnt that the chateau was not the only building Joan and her compatriots had occupied that would fail to live up to our expectations, that resisted memorialisation, despite the historical evidence we brought to bear. Perhaps what we were lacking was the consensus and ritual that confer memorial status upon some historic sites. Artefacts alone could not breathe life into stone. This place was the secret of a select few—ANCXF (and before them German Paratroops)—not a public memorial endorsed by collective acts of remembrance repeated over successive years. Its significance, for us, was circumstantial; it was sanctified by the familial act of commemoration as but a contingent touchstone referenced in letters and old photographs (Fig. 3.1).

Locating the image calls into play the remembrance of an action. We were trying to rehearse the action at Chateau d'Hennemont, to stand in the position of the people in Joan's image, and to reframe the photograph. In this way, we attempted to identify ourselves with her experience by placing ourselves corporeally in site, willing her past to reach out to our present. This is reminiscent of Hirsch's discussion of Barthes' 'winter-garden photo'. Hirsch explains that Barthes'

> … desire is to recognize not only his mother but himself, not only to recognize but to be recognized by her … The familial look … is not the look of a subject looking at an object, but a mutual look of a subject looking at an object who is looking (back) at an object. (Hirsch 2012a, p. 9)

This complexity of repetitive mirroring comes across in the filmed document, precisely when we tried to locate the exact spot of Joan's image. We stood in her place and looked for her image, but also 'that which she looked upon'. In this case, the 'site' replaces Joan, representing our effort to locate her memory in 'things' and 'place'. Hirsch explains this further with regard to how 'Barthes makes photography – taking the

Fig. 3.2 (©2018, Karen Savage and Justin Smith)

picture, developing it, printing and looking at it, reading and writing about it – inherently familial and material, akin to the very processes of life and death' (Hirsch 2012a, p. 12). Hirsch refers to a cyclic and repetitive process, of which we become a part through the action of interacting with an image. We propose that this process was, for us, also a familial act of commemoration. The dialectical relation of a familial act of commemoration (Justin following in his mother's footsteps) and an act of familial commemoration (Justin commemorating his mother's journey) echoes the idea of repetitive mirroring, because that which is doing the 'action' becomes that which is 'acted' upon. In this sense then, the commemorative act is made manifest in a state of flux—palpable, yet endlessly deferred, forever unresolved.

Another sequence in our film takes place in Laon, a small French town we passed through between the war cemeteries of Alsace and Flanders. Steeped in the history of European conflicts, Laon rises from the plain of battlefields, its hilltop church a monastery to remembrance. After a tour of the church, we stop for lunch in a cafe, where the rolling news on the wall-mounted TV screen shows President Sarkozy at the Élysée Palace mourning the funeral cortège of French service personnel killed on foreign soil. Later, we walk the wet, cobbled streets beneath the bowed heads of saints; sentinel pigeons line the tops of buildings and below a dead bird lies fallen from its nest. In this montage sequence, the familial experience of war, of sacrifice and remembrance, becomes both collective and immemorial. Significantly, here we are reminded, through the image of Sarkozy and the recent news events, that the narrative of war is ongoing, and collective as well as personal. The familial memory of war experience can be echoed and recycled on a personal level, just as a society rehearses rituals of public mourning. Yet, at the same time, the immediacy of Joan's letters and photographs (by turns touristic and visceral, quotidian and impassioned) eschews the rehearsed reverence of mediated commemoration that we stumbled upon, perhaps simply because we *were* looking where we were going (Fig. 3.2).

Fig. 3.3 (©2018, Karen Savage and Justin Smith)

It was Minden itself, however, that was destined to provide the most potent yet unstable ground for our rejourn. We came armed with Joan's small monochrome prints: of a bomb-damaged marketplace, of the Melitta factory-turned Peschke aircraft works, reclaimed by HMS *Royal Albert* as their HQ, of floods and, comically, of swimming pools too. Yet, at each turn, our unsatisfactory attempts to relocate those images, to reconcile past and present within the 'punctum of time' was made plain. Sometimes it was warped trigonometry that drove us to distraction, as when trying to reframe the railway bridge across the river Weser (Fig. 3.3).

The floods of autumn 1945, captured in Joan's photographs, obliterated the landscape around the town, adding wretched insult to the injury of Allied bombs; the passage of time had doubly redrawn the contours. Floods expanded our metaphorical horizons: apocalypse, a new covenant, memories flooding back and forth. Elsewhere, the Melitta factory had resumed and modernised its business in an effective corporate erasure of war memory (a symbol of Germany's post-war economic renaissance). Around the marketplace, with its ancient *Rathaus*, we encountered the reverse problem: an abundance of representations across many centuries. The subject was immutable, memory-proof, resistant to the subjectivity of personal encounters.

Our methodology and our experience find echoes in the *Vertigo* (1958) sequence of Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983).[7] Burlin Barr writes:

> In each case, although these searches uncover telling facts, traces and presences which begin to profile the object of their attentions, they are

[7] Chris Marker's complex and dazzling film essay, a pseudo-documentary on the subject of memory that crosses continents and time zones and combines an array of visual styles and textures, is narrated by a female voice-over, purportedly reading from the letters of an

> ultimately confronted with the ungraspable, as they approach an objective sedimented within interfering structures of memory, longing, fascination and desire. What they try to profile, to describe, to own, or to find the boundaries of, ultimately can be only memorialised. (Barr 2004, p. 174)

In our film, staging posts on the journey we recorded became signifiers of the 'ungraspable'; like roughly made shrines on a pilgrim trail, they were sites of *approximate* memorialisation standing for impossible memory. Our pursuit, to find and place ourselves in the locations of Joan's photographs, at the junctions of her sentences, became in our film, like Krasna's return to *Vertigo*'s San Francisco, a 'play between different kinds of imaging [that] ultimately provides a formal enactment of … impossible searches' (ibid.). As Barr writes of that sequence in *Sans Soleil*:

> It should come as no surprise that this effort to locate conjunctions between virtual and material places requires visits to sites of memorialisation: gravestones, museums, portraits … They are touchstones, after all, constants bridging not only present and past but, in this case, worlds of fiction and fact. (Barr 2004, p. 175)

The bridges we constructed between present and past in our film, at sites of approximate memorialisation, were not required also to connect, like Krasna's, the worlds of fiction and fact (unless one considers the past a kind of fiction). But where the archival evidence that supported these structures failed, we shored them up with recourse to metaphor, found objects that came to hand (as in Laon), using the tools of film-making at our disposal. In this way, our filmed document fills those spaces between present and past; it is a mediation and a meditation on memory and loss. What we made of it, as an expression of our rejourn, is the subject of the next section.

anthropologist, one Sandor Krasna. Burlin Barr's analysis of Marker's film dissects what he calls its 'most provocative section' which 'has its setting in no particular location or time, but in another film – Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. The sequence … is decidedly intertextual and its qualities of "mise-en-abyme" constitute only one of many ways that this film ponders its own motives and design. … Sandor Krasna visits San Francisco where he follows the trail of Scottie (Jimmy Stewart's character in *Vertigo*). Krasna's detective work, an attempt to visit the empirical origins of the film *Vertigo*, inevitably reminds us of Scottie's frenetic detective work to uncover the concrete origins of his own fantasies (fantasies of the character Madeleine, played by Kim Novak)' (Barr 2004, p. 173).

Enacting Familial Commemoration: The Presentation of the Installation *The Birds That Wouldn't Sing*

In the installation, the film is presented in the form of a triptych constructing a further sedimentary layer of transitions between three screens. Viewers of the work bring their physical presence to the experience, in much the same way that Deleuze explores the filmmaker's presence in Vertovian montage (Deleuze 1992, pp. 39–40); here, the corporeal presence of the experiencer embodies the process of the film, as they choose which screen to focus upon. In effect, they 'stand in' for the edit. Just as our encounter in Laon brought together personal and collective memories of conflict so each experiencer's subjective interpretation of the installation is also a shared encounter. This focus on the subjective/collective experience of the inter-medial audience is elaborated by Robin Nelson:

> In the context of contemporary arts and media, experiencer serves where audience or even 'spect-actor' (Boal) prove inadequate. It suggests a more immersive engagement in which the principles of composition of the piece create an environment designed to elicit a broadly visceral, sensual encounter, as distinct from conventional theatre, concert or art gallery architectures which are constructed to draw upon one of these sense organs - eyes (spectator) or ears (audience). (Bay-Cheng et al. 2010, p. 45)

Therefore, when the work is presented in this way the experiencer becomes part of the journey; their experience shifts between the here and now of the installation space, and the fragmented attempts at rediscovering layers of familial memory.

This subjective positioning is further emphasised in the way that each film sequence runs for a different length of time, fading before re-looping. When the sequence is complete, it simply plays again, providing the experiencer with accidental juxtapositions. This enacts memory, in that it never rehearses recall in precisely the same way, and as it diminishes (fades) it also varies and new cross-connections are made. In the installation environment, the experiencer can come and go freely, accessing the work at contingent and unchoreographed points. This challenges the idea of the journey as linear narrative and instead evokes the thwarted, deferred progress of the rejourn, which characterised the Wrens' circuitous route from France into Germany as much as our own experience. It also captures formally the reiterative, dialectical relation we encountered between place-as-location and

photographic record, between subject/object, mother and son. It proposes an idea of commemoration as an act (personal and public, familial and collective) that is unresolved, ongoing, like insatiable desire (à la *Sans Soleil* and *Vertigo*). We shall return to this idea in the conclusion.

In the interactive installation, the aural component is created by the experiencer who has the opportunity to read aloud printed extracts from Joan's letters home. This constitutes a self-selected and randomised soundtrack to accompany the looping visual presentation. The verbatim mode of performance is both personal and immediate, re-presenting (making present again) the vitality of the wartime letters.

This mode of audio-visual presentation leads the experiencer to reflect upon and contribute to the commemorative act. We made the decision to involve the experiencer in the act of familial commemoration in this way, rather than having an actor record or perform a voice-over which might seek to recreate period and subject authenticity. The last thing we wanted was an actor to 'play' the young Joan. In our design, there are opportunities for those experiencing the work to take on different roles: as reader-performers and as witnesses. It invites the commemorative aura of ritual and the opportunity to participate in personal, family history as a memorial act which is gestural, iterative, partial and unresolved. This design resists any orthodox liturgy (associated with public, collective acts of commemoration) beyond the text of the letters themselves.

Joan's letters then are a trace of the past; we construct new stories through the performance of remembering these letters once voiced. The performance voices their immediacy, animates their present moment, and presents their past anew. This dynamic tension in the work between the presentation of the visual and aural registers appears to extend the relationship between performance and document in the sense that the once 'document of' is reconsidered as the 'stimulus for' a reenactment (of sorts)—an act of commemoration. And we can consider this in relation to how memory has been captured, stored, remembered, shared and received. This is a process of documenting memory in order to perform once again: to commemorate.

Michael Rothberg suggests that 'we consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative' (Rothberg 2009, p. 3). Using Rothberg's approach, the experiencer can shape the performance, which takes influence from the documents of the past whilst simultaneously recognising the present. As Rothberg suggests:

> The notion of a 'making present' has two important corollaries: first, that memory is a contemporary phenomenon, something that, while concerned with the past, happens in the present; and second, that memory is a form of work, working through, labor, or action. (Rothberg 2009, pp. 3–4)

Furthermore, Rebecca Schneider reminds us of the importance of this type of work and the responsibility of the archive as a working document or 'script': 'archives are, first and foremost, *theatres* for repertoires of preservation, leaning toward and into a promise of the coming "liveness" of encounter' (Schneider 2011, p. 109).

Diane Taylor's earlier work provides a triangulation point for these two ideas when she explains how the tensions between the archive and the repertoire, containing 'verbal performances – songs, prayers, speeches – as well as nonverbal practices', exist 'between written and spoken language' (Taylor 2003, p. 24). In our interactive installation, experiencers are encouraged to speak the written word, thus presenting the archive as repertoire, and to challenge the dichotomy between writing and speech, and between the archive's past and the performance's present.

Rothberg further proposes that multidirectional memory 'encourages us to think of the public sphere as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others' (Rothberg 2009, p. 5). This coming into being is provoked, in *The Birds That Wouldn't Sing*, by the presenting (the making present) of Joan's letters. With Rothberg, Schneider and Taylor in mind, the next section models the interrelation of words and images from the archival and filmed documents assembled. We present extracts from letters home that articulate three commemorative occasions—Armistice Day (11 November 1944), VE Day (8 May 1945) and VJ Day (15 August 1945)—juxtaposed with visual material, in order to give a sense of the dialectical fields in play (Figs. 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6).

St Germain-En-Laye, 11th November 1944

To-day, being Armistice Day, there are celebrations all over the country on a large scale. In this same nearby town, there was a parade in which our Marines took part, so this morning Ginge and I set out to watch same. We walked into the park and followed the crowd. There were dozens of people walking very determinedly in one direction so we went too. We arrived at the spot in time for the "Marseillaise" and then suddenly everyone began to run.

Fig. 3.4 (©2018, Karen Savage and Justin Smith)

It really was the most extraordinary business! They were all running in the same direction – from whence we'd just come, incidentally – and there were boys and girls, young men and young women, grey haired old ladies – all tearing along at a terrific rate. Old men – one in particular just in front of us had a dog which snapped at people's ankles as they overtook him – even one old man in a bath chair was wheeling himself along. Well, we thought, must be something doing so we joined in.

This all took place in the park so it was something like a glorified cross-country run, over lawns, through masses of leaves, in between trees, people threading their way in and out with amazing rapidity – just as if every Saturday morning they always did this! Boys in coloured uniforms – the equivalent of our Boy Scouts I should think – charged along carrying long wooden poles – I tell you, it was fantastic. However, nothing daunted we panted along. I did think once that we might hitch a lift from the old chap in the bath chair, but decided after a moment's thought that I could out-run him.

Well, we ended up where we'd come in, in front of a lovely old chateau, where the crowds were beginning to line the roads. We had a camera with us and Ginge was going to take a snap of the boys as they came along if she could, so we didn't want to get too far back. Knowing us, or should I say me, we managed to get in front and stay there! Everyone was wearing Red, White and Blue ribbons and badges and pictures of General de Gaulle and General Leclerc and goodness knows what. People swarmed round, climbed railings and trees and in fact wormed their way everywhere – it was too amazing for words.

At last along came a contingent of what I should imagine was the equivalent of our Chelsea Pensioners. They were resplendent in silver helmets (looked quite like firemen really) and shuffled along followed by a French band. As the latter speaks for itself I won't comment on it. Then came the American military band headed by the most ridiculous drum-major I've ever seen - Rhythm wasn't the word! If he'd had a scarf instead of a mace he might have been doing the rumba! The Yankees marched at their usual casual rate, and then – came the Royal Marines in blues! Our boys from the camp. They easily outshone any of the others there and Ginge and I went out in front of the crowd and Ginge took two shots of them. Whether the snaps will come out or not we don't know as they were moving all the time. Still, we're hoping. Then came matelots in blues and then more Marines in khaki.

After that we more or less joined on the end of the parade so that we'd get through the gates without having to push through the crowd, and when they were all lined up outside we took another snap. We then came back to the office where I'm now typing this.

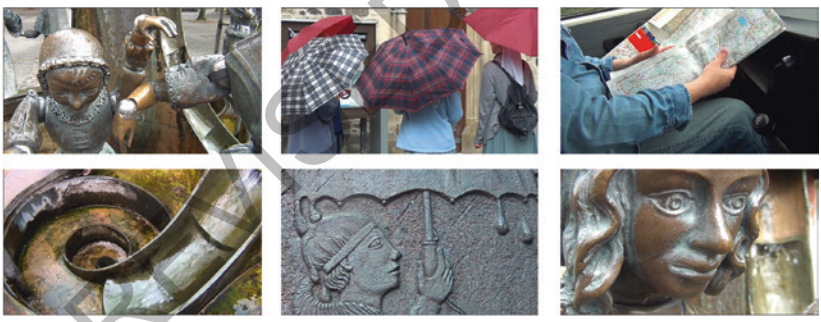

Fig. 3.5 (©2018, Karen Savage and Justin Smith)

Paris, 14th May 1945

Paris looks lovelier than ever now, because all the fountains have been turned on and shoot up cooling streams of clear water in different patterns. They say VE day here was terrific! One fellow was in London on VE night and in Paris the night after (he flew over) and he says that London wasn't a patch on Paris. They have the Big Four's flags hung from the middle of the Arc de Triomphe and in the middle of the Avenue Grande Armée about 200 yards from the Arch, they've placed a giant searchlight, barricaded around, which plays on the Arch when it gets dark. It's really beautiful.

The Sacre Coeur (remember, the church on top of Montmartre?) also is floodlit and as you leave Paris by train you can see it standing out bathed in light from the top of the hill – it's lovely. I wish I could photograph them for you and let you see how wonderful they look. We didn't stay late last night because we all felt still tired from the journey, but soon I am going to stay in till the late train to see all the illuminations.

Fig. 3.6 (©2018, Karen Savage and Justin Smith)

Minden, Westphalia, 15th August 1945

So, it's VJ Day at last! What a pity it didn't come during my leave because then I could have taken the 48 hours off that the bus drivers and dockers and railwaymen are giving themselves! I would have taken it too – permission or not. Honestly these people here make me sick – here it is, the end of the war and we're all sitting at our typewriters and carrying on as usual just as if it were any other day! So far, there's nothing on to-night either, no dance, party or anything, but that's the way the Navy works over matters of time off. As far as I'm concerned, however, this is VJ Day and I'm not doing any work at all!

Now, how are you spending VJ Day at home? Do write and tell me all about it! Wish I could see dear old London now. It was happy enough last Friday, but I 'spect everyone's going mad there now.

Here, the party spirit is definitely abroad. Everyone is terrifically noisy in the office and no-one will work, and we're just making it an unofficial day off spent in the office! It's fun really, because it's a kind of mutiny by the Wrens!

Big news – someone's just been in and piped "Splice the Main Brace" for the Wrens as well as Matelots! We'll all be typing upside down after that I should think! Still, it's only once in a lifetime (I hope!).

Things are just beginning to get organised here. We've a concert (?) to-morrow afternoon and a Ship's Company Dance in the evening and that should be quite entertaining. We're having a bit of difficulty getting about here now because the weather's shocking. It's been raining every day for a week now as far as I can gather – and it's still raining. We live near the River Weser which has to be crossed almost every time we go to a dance or anything. Well, of course, all the bridges were blown by the Germans before we arrived and we've thrown pontoon bridges across temporarily. The pontoon bridge has now been swept away and we're more or less hemmed in [as a] consequence [sic]. I tell you – everything happens to me!

Yesterday I wrote to the Trolley-Bus people about my scarf and enclosed a stamped addressed envelope addressed to you, so you should hear one way or the other in due course.

Wonder of wonders! We've a half-day to-day. Now isn't that marvellous! Work all day to-morrow however, so we'll miss the afternoon concert, but never mind – I didn't really expect we'd get two days.

Tea has just arrived on the scene and at 11.30 – as I've already told you, we Splice the Mainbrace! Never before has this been done in the History of the Royal Navy or Wrens!

Well, I'm afraid I'll have to stop this now because my tea's getting cold and I've a new copy of Punch to read, and I'm so excited that I can't type straight. Anyhow, I just wanted to write to you to-day – the most wonderful day in our History – the world at peace. I know the glamour will only last a few days because over here the grim reality of war will go on – even though the fighting's over – and war's mark will last for years. But to-day we're not thinking about that over here – we're only feeling thankful it's over and looking back on a job well done. (That's what they tell us, anyway!).

Conclusion

The use of personal testimony, family memories and archival materials (letters and photographs) is now commonplace in television presentations of commemorative events, just as it is increasingly familiar in family social occasions (christenings, birthday celebrations, weddings and funerals). No doubt the popularity of family history websites and television shows, together with the rise of social media applications, has had much to do with the common currency of such (historical) artefacts.[8] When it comes

[8]For example, the BBC's BAFTA award-winning celebrity family history show *Who Do You Think You Are?* (Wall to Wall [a Warner Bros Television Production UK Ltd. Company], 2004–) is, at the time of writing, in its 15th series and regularly attracts an

to acts of remembrance, the centenary of the battle of Passchendaele marked by the BBC on 31 July 2017 is, at the time of writing, but the latest in a well-established media format. This project has combined those same ingredients not with a public, commemorative event but with a filmed document of a personal pilgrimage of discovery across Europe. The presentation of those elements in the final installation employs techniques which serve to create a sense of ritual and litany through (randomised and selective) repetition, and to offer opportunities for engagement in the social act of commemoration in which the personal, singular experience (both ours and Joan's) can be shared. It can be shared in ways which both universalise the personal and singular as a commemorative act, and enable the experiencer to re-personalise or, as Bottoms has it, to 'authorise' them, in their own way (Bottoms 2009, pp. 65–76).

Our rejourn was a process of discovery in which we have learnt much about the meaning of commemoration. One of the fundamental distinctions we would want to draw between formal, ritualistic, public and televised acts of commemoration (like the annual march past The Cenotaph in Whitehall and the British Legion Festival of Remembrance) and our own experience is that they use personal testimony and archival sources within a ritual (and often regimented) military context. The personal account is offered (usually as an insert) as an example of the collective, uniformed experience of war service and sacrifice. This is not a performance of commemoration we would want to contest in any way. It is long-established, well-respected and performs an immensely popular social function as an effective locus for collective, inclusive and personal expressions of remembrance. But our experience has suggested that there are other possibilities for shared acts of commemoration that foreground personal testimony, family memory and archival material to evoke a more direct and singular sense of wartime experience. And the process of our rejourn has also revealed the commemorative act to be more diffuse and dislocated, yet embodied in the dynamic relations between past and present, subject/object, word and image.

audience in excess of 6 million. Since the late 1990s, Ancestry.com has established itself as the leading international family history website with over 2 million users worldwide. It has spawned many rivals (such as the British site Findmypast.co.uk), including those specialising in military service like forces-war-records.co.uk.

As researchers, in reflecting upon and expressing our familial commemoration, we were drawn to a vocabulary that stressed the contingent nature of our enterprise. Our sense of rejourn stressed the act of commemoration as intangible, unresolved, approximate and incomplete. We recognised why commemoration needs to construct its own memorials, as the focus for local communities and even (perhaps especially) from the sites of the battlefields themselves. Why it institutes its own rituals as a litany for collective remembrance. How, in televised coverage, their military precision, their dignified tributes are carefully rehearsed, reverently choreographed. Yet, what we learnt from our own journey of discovery, our personal homage, is that acts of commemoration can also be experiential, gestural, iterative works in progress—never complete, never enough. And it struck us that inadequacy is actually a vital quality of commemoration. Just as we are enjoined to 'never forget', the difficulty of commemoration is that we can never remember enough.

In *The Birds That Wouldn't Sing*, we have tried to incorporate this urgent sense of the unresolved nature of commemoration in the repetitive, cyclical looping of the film sequences, and the random iterative relation between the three screens. Only once do the three loops run in synch and, thereafter, their cyclical repetition drives them ever further from resolution, incorporating each time a new lag into the sequence. This slippage, like the distanciation of events in the passage of time and the lapse of memory itself, is countered by the experiencer's reading—an embodied re-presentation of the personal testimony of war that evokes its immediacy and its humanity, that gives it a new voice and invokes commemoration as a necessary participatory act of engagement.

As our distance from the world wars that blighted the twentieth century grows (soon to be beyond the scope of living memory), so personal acts of familial commemoration become vital because they will be the first to be forgotten, marginalised. According to Hirsch:

> Postmemory describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up. (Hirsch 2012b, p. 5)

In this chapter, we have argued for the significance of those 'handed-down' artefacts of memory to the 'generation after', and the performative possibilities of engaging with such materials in personal acts of

familial commemoration. For us, the importance of recording personal testimony, preserving material artefacts and performing commemorative acts is paramount in securing for future generations a meaningful legacy of the individual experiences and collective sacrifices of past conflicts. We suggest that such informal approaches to commemoration could have a productive and inclusive function within our public institutions and memorial traditions. There may be new opportunities for interactive engagement with personal war memories and their constitutive artefacts as commemorative acts of remembrance. Andrew Whitmarsh writes:

> Commemoration in museums … may represent (potentially contradictory) attempts both to come to terms with the past and to recall a past which is in danger of being forgotten; possibly even an attempt by new generations to claim the past – from survivors and witnesses – as their own. (Whitmarsh 2001, p. 13)

These tensions, which are destined to remain unresolved, are manifest in our work *The Birds That Wouldn't Sing*, and are foregrounded in its presentation as an installation. The potential contradictions that Whitmarsh identifies may also inspire war museums and national memorial events to draw further upon performative commemoration work such as ours in order to provide more diverse and inclusive modes of access for a post-memory generation.

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CHAPTER 4

Commemoration: Sacred Differentiation of Time and Space in Three World War I Projects

Helen Newall

For some time now, World War 1 has been a recurring aspect of my creative work, during and after which I have noted particular subjective experiences that I have come to equate with commemoration. These are discussed here in terms of sacred differentiation, and phenomenological *epoché*.

Mircea Eliade defines the sacred as 'an absolute fixed point' in the otherwise 'homogenous and infinite expanse' of space and time (Eliade 1987) and, with reference to Rudolph Otto's *Das Heilige* (*The Sacred* 1917), as an experience, 'which manifests itself as a reality of a wholly different order from "natural" realities' (Eliade 1987, p. 10). For William S. Haney, the sacred within theatre involves a void in thought (a concept he takes from Artaud), and which he defines as, 'a state of mind that begins with language and meaning and then goes beyond them through a shift in consciousness' (Haney in Yarrow 2007, p. 68). This, he claims, produces 'a liminal zone of sacred experience,

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the in-between-ness we transit whenever we encounter and then go beyond pairs of opposites' (ibid.). This, I argue, is akin to a phenomenological *epoché* or suspension, and I propose that these fixed points of differentiation are facilitated by the mind state described in Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of 'flow' (1992) (which will be described later). What concerns me here is commemoration as a sacred experience, differentiated from the profane either by the managed, or accidental, confluence of certain conditions. This chapter discusses three World War I projects, commissioned to mark anniversaries, through the lenses of Eliade's 'fixed point' and Haney's 'liminal zone' found in the 'shift in consciousness that effects a blurring of boundaries between subject and object, self and other' (Haney in Yarrow 2007, p. 68). It identifies personal and subjective moments in each project, achieved, I argue, in creative experiences of flow, which enabled the *epoché* of temporal and spatial differentiation to occur. It proposes that these experiences are momentary hierophanies (manifestations of the sacred), in which an action is shifted from merely marking an anniversary to commemorating it.

Silent Night and No Man's Land (2014)

Silent Night was a touring professional production for four actors, featuring set, costume, and fourth wall, with a linear narrative of scenes and songs of a non-diegetic nature, that is to say, not sung *by* the characters, but performed outside their ontological system by the actors playing them, in this case, as Brechtian commentaries.

Commissioned in 2008 by Theatre in the Quarter, Chester, *Silent Night* toured as their Christmas show of that same year on the Cheshire circuit of the National Rural Touring Forum, a network 'driven primarily by the desire to overcome social, geographic, economic and psychological barriers that have historically inhibited the enjoyment of the arts by people in rural communities' (NRTF 2018, online). It depicted the involvement of the Cheshire Regiment in the British Expeditionary Force (the combined regiments of the British Army sent to the Western Front), from the start of the Great War to the 1914 Christmas Truce. Its characters are Great War archetypes synthesised, as far as possible, from accounts of Cheshire people collected from a variety of sources, including the archives of the Chester Military Museum. They comprise: a nurse with nascent feminist tendencies who serves at the Front; her sweetheart,

an officer in the Cheshire Regiment, who experiences the Retreat from Mons, and then the trenches; her brother, a recruit to Kitchener's Army, escaping life as an office clerk; and her youngest brother, who, underaged, shell shocked and broken, comes to regret his desire for glory. In 2014, *Silent Night* was reworked and retoured to mark the centenary of the Christmas Truce.

In 2008, what increasingly interested me as I wrote were not the narrative trajectories of the characters (which is probably a crime for a playwright to admit), but the numinous and uncanny liminalities of time and space in the Great War, which found specific focus in the Christmas Eve Truce and No Man's Land. *Silent Night* was not my first encounter with No Man's Land: in 2004 I had written *Anthem* for the Southampton Nuffield Theatre, which dealt, as its title might suggest, with the poetry of the Great War. It was perhaps then that my interest began, for even then it seemed to me to be a threshold into a phenomenological suspension, interruption, and liminal differentiation in which Ralph Yarrow finds *epoché* (2007, p. 16). In these terms, then, No Man's Land was *extremely* differentiated from the Edwardian era that the Great War interrupted. Outside ownership, beyond understanding (a void if ever there was one), it was the entrance and initiation into death, and an underworld of the dead and dying exposed in plain sight, except that to look risked swift death by sniper's bullet. It was the shattered landscape de-familiarised from previous existence in an ultimate and deadly form of the Russian Formalists' *ostranenie* (in which a writer takes the familiar and makes it strange). It was thus forbidden, and unknown, and yet there was a system of rules, regulations and rituals for entering it, and those who entered it often did not return. Thus, No Man's Land has elements of Rudolf Otto's *mysterium tremendum*—an awe-inspiring mystery (1958, p. 12): it is ineffable, numinous, demarcated space, governed by rules and imbued with mystery, and indeed the ultimate mystery of death. I'd been rereading Joseph Campbell at the time, and everything I read about No Man's Land seemed to accord with his writings about crossing the threshold 'out of the land we know into darkness', and the difficulties of representing such a world beyond speech:

> How render back into light-world language the speech defying pronouncements of the dark? How represent on a two-dimensional surface a three-dimensional form, or in a three-dimensional image a multi-dimensional meaning? How translate into terms of 'yes' and 'no' revelations that

> shatter into meaninglessness every attempt to define the pairs of opposites? How communicate to people who insist on the exclusive evidence of their senses the message of the all-generating void? (Campbell 1975, pp. 188–189)

It is poignant that those who returned from the Great War often rarely spoke about it: perhaps not because they wouldn't, but because they couldn't. But those who did describe it, in words or paint, often recreated it in otherworldly manifestations: Tolkien writes thus:

> I remember miles and miles of seething, tortured earth, perhaps best described in the chapters about the approaches to Mordor. It was a searing experience. (cited in Birzer 2009, pp. 2–3)

And as Leed notes, David Jones's *In Parenthesis* (1937) also presents the wider experience of the Great War as something bracketed or differentiated—something evident in the title and the work's heightened prose (1981, pp. 2–3)—while Charles Edmund Carrington asserts that the Great War renders its soldiers initiates, 'possessing a secret which can never be communicated' (cited in Leed 1981, p. 12), unless this secret is transposed into other voices, other registers of expression that distance the teller from what is told.[1]

My growing obsession with No Man's Land shifted the register of the voices in both *Anthem* and *Silent Night*: there was an urge to be outside character, and inside poetry. This was perhaps an awareness that the prose characterising other parts of the play was not adequate, for No Man's Land was always too big, too incomprehensible. Perhaps in praxis, I finally understood what *In Parenthesis* had already demonstrated, that sometimes prose is not enough. And I do confess that I felt huge imposter's guilt in writing about what I hadn't experienced, at what I could only imagine, and which was too big, too awful for imagination.

Christmas Eve, though, is worlds away from the kind of differentiation we would associate with No Man's Land. Nevertheless, it is for some differentiated: time stops, candles are lit, and the Western

[1] As an early reader of this chapter has noted, this is a fascinating and rich reversal of the bracketing of epoché, an analytical process whereby external things are not let in, into one where things are not let out (unless released through the shift of register from factual autobiography into fictionalised fact).

Christian world holds it breath. Throughout the autumn of 1914, there had already been brief truces where the shooting stopped and the dead were buried.[2] A precedent thus existed, but the Christmas Truce narrative is one concerning a co-incidence of the differentiated space of No Man's Land with the differentiated time of the first Christmas Eve in the trenches. The other differentiating constituent was that, after a wet autumn, witnesses report that the rain stopped, a hard frost set in, and the moon and stars came out—it was, according Albert Moren 'Christmas card weather' (cited in Brown 1981, online). Bruce Bairnsfather wrote of 'a sense of strangeness' (cited in Weintraub 2002, p. 16), and Henry Williamson of, 'the strange unreality of the silence of the night' (ibid.: 22), both thus articulating a defamiliarisation. Meanwhile, the Kaiser had sent his troops little Christmas trees decorated with tiny candles, which they set on the parapets. Add to this confluence of circumstances, the Germans' singing of *Stille Nacht* carrying in the still air over the frosted ground, and there is a concurrence of elements which made an *epoché* in the homogeneity of the everyday, and what Eliade describes as a fixed point, 'wholly different from the profane' (1987, p. 11) which in turn made possible the extraordinary circumstances which then went on to occur: the opposing armies got out of their trenches, and instead of working distantly without interaction as in previous recent truces, they walked to meet each other, and exchanged small souvenirs, chocolate, nips of schnapps, and then the following day played the famous game of football.

Silent Night ran to this Christmas Eve moment and then held its breath. This, for me, was its centre, based as it was on an event so powerfully evocative such that sitting, one summer's day, in an archive holding a 100 year old diary detailing these events in the darkness of No Man's Land was like touching a holy relic. The object had a palpable Benjaminian aura (Benjamin and Arendt 2007); a circuit had been completed, I was connected to that night. (It is interesting to here note, that the football match has always seemed to me profane, and ordinary in its extraordinariness: something that should have been happening instead of the atrocities of the trenches.)

Writing a play about the Great War inevitably places the writer into a wide frame of cultural and critical reference: haunted by Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* (1973), there is, not least of all, the Theatre Workshop and

[2] For histories of the Christmas Truce, see Brown and Seaton (2001), Weintraub (2002), Macdonald (1987), and Brown (2004).

Joan Littlewood production, *Oh, What a Lovely War!* (1963) and subsequently Richard Attenborough's film (1969), which include quite possibly the most famous theatrical representation of the Christmas Truce. I spent hours worrying about Joan. Even more broadly, Christian Carion's film *Joyeux Noel* (2006), Paul McCartney's *Pipes of Peace* (1983), and the Sainsbury's Christmas adverts that ran in 2014 illustrate how this iconic moment of the Great War is firmly embedded in cultural consciousness. Yet, many of these treatments have been critically attacked either for their anodyne treatment of trench life or for their inaccuracies: Ally Fogg called the Sainsbury's advert, 'a dangerous and disrespectful masterpiece' (2014, online). In 2014, the RSC produced Phil Porter's play *The Christmas Truce*, which, according to director Erica Whyman, was inspired by the scene in *Oh! What a Lovely War* (Programme notes, RSC 2014). Porter's play dramatises the early wartime experiences of local Stratford man Bruce Bairnsfather: the Great War cartoonist as well as one of the electricians who, before the Great War, electrified the RSC's earlier building, the Memorial Theatre. Porter's play begins with a quintessentially English cricket match—with echoes of *The Go Between* (Hartley 1953) and the past as a foreign country where they 'do things differently' (ibid., p. 7)—and ends with the famous No Man's Land football match. War is thus framed in, through, and by, competitive games. The metaphor of being caught out in cricket is used to signify death, which, in a family friendly production, neatly side-steps the bloody reality of conflict. The play foregrounds the humorous rough and ready trench companions who, Porter suggests, inspired Bairnsfather's later cartoon characters such as Old Bill, and who are akin to the profane rude mechanicals of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* transposed to a strange midwinter's night dream. 'What we have here', writes Michael Billington, 'is a show that echoes the surface exuberance of *Oh! What a Lovely War* without its savage indignation' (2014, online). Billington's argument is that '[t]he ceasefire of 1914 was undoubtedly a powerful moment. But surrounded as it was by death, tragedy and brutality, can it really make a festive night of theatre?' Online commentators agree and disagree, one adding that it is, 'another sorry contribution to the sentimentalisation of the event' (ibid.). But this was the RSC's family Christmas show and family audiences do not want a searing indictment of war such as *All Quiet on the Western Christmas Front* (Remarque 1929), (and below-the-line critics haven't always necessarily seen the show itself!). I thought it was beautiful, but what it didn't do (which

the programme did) was make explicit the link between Bairnsfather and the old Memorial Theatre, which is a shame for audiences without programmes because the 'circuit' of performance as commemoration lies in connection: between Bairnsfather and the old theatre he worked on as an electrician, and us in Stratford in 2014, watching events of 1914 depicted by the theatre company whose former building he helped to illuminate. Such connection depends on knowledge. Perhaps some in the audiences knew their local histories better than the critics: the circuit of connection is a thing perceived subjectively.

As a post-script to this section, I note that connection and thus commemoration is often found in unlikely places: after *Silent Night's* 2008 production, I was contacted from New Zealand by relatives of a soldier whose accounts of the Cheshire Regiment's retreat from Mons I had used. They had found excerpts of the play online. We exchanged emails. I sent them production stills and the full script. They thanked me for commemorating him. That felt so much more important than any of the more usual responses, probably because there was a circuit completed by a direct connection to a historical voice I had used verbatim. It was as if the character himself were speaking to me.

Over by Christmas and Site Specificity (2014)

Over By Christmas was a site-sympathetic community drama with songs, marking the centenary of the outbreak of WW1 and the entrainment of troops at the stations on which it was performed. Part of the Imperial War Museum's First World War Centenary Partnership Project, it involved over 400 performers, and 1,250 school children from across Cheshire. There were 47 performances, at 25 railway stations throughout the North West, including Manchester Piccadilly Station, and several performances at St. Pancras International, London. Audience numbers stand at over 20,000. In 2015, it won an Association of Community Rail Partnerships award.

Over By Christmas was set in the same time period as *Silent Night*, but being street performance it foregrounded the 'headlines' of events rather than character-driven narratives. But here, the connection came from its site-specificity: actors in Edwardian dress repeated the actions of long-dead soldiers and their families on the same train station platforms (see Fig. 4.1). What was brought into play here was the performativity of site-specific connection, which according to Mike Pearson depends upon:

> … the complex superimposition and co-existence of a number of narratives and architectures, historical and contemporary. These fall into two groups: those that pre-exist the work—of the host—and those which are of the work—of the ghost. (Pearson 1997, p. 96)

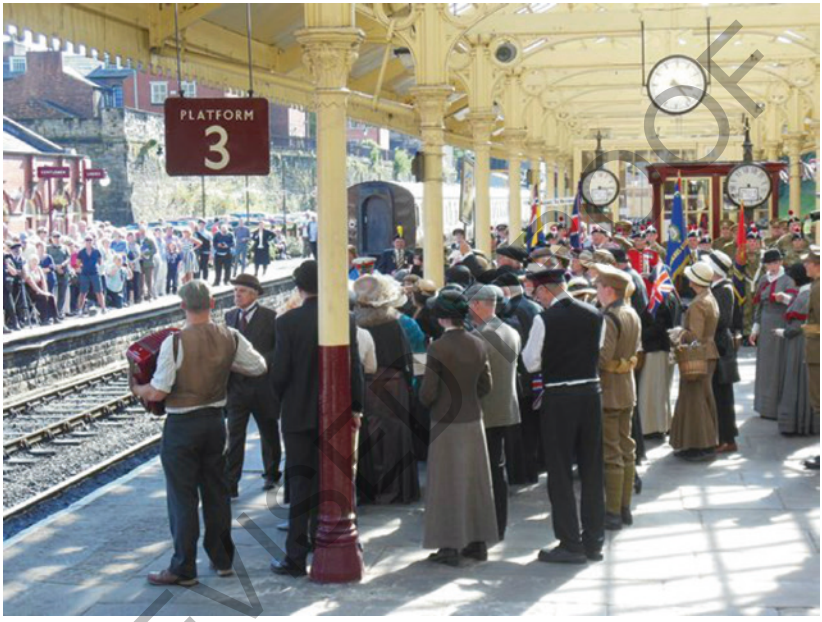

Fig. 4.1 Performers and audience encounter one another across platforms in *Over By Christmas* (2014) (Image: Sally Butterworth)

In already being the sites depicted, these stations were no longer heritage eccentricities, their histories were exposed, and they 'became themselves'. But herein lies the unruliness of re-enactment, for while the performers were *visual* ghosts—they looked like they belonged—they were essences rather than exact repetitions: this was an *ersatz* haunting by pseudo-ghosts performing an impressionistic version of events synthesised from fragments of cultural memory, historical documentation, and speculative guesses. Here, I acknowledge what Rebecca Schneider terms 'the curious inadequacies of the copy' (2011, p. 6): not this cloth; not this button; not this conversation, but essences of them. With these

inadequacies of 'nearly, but not exactly' come the disruptive shadows from Masahiro Mori's *Uncanny Valley* where things jar that are not quite right, but these jarring edges or inadequacies can be where remembrance emerges because they reveal the palimpsest of the original and the remembered copy.

Perhaps the most poignant anachronistic 'inadequacy' is that in this essence of the war's beginning, we carried poppies—the flowers Jay Winter considers miniature war memorials (2009, p. 160)—their splashes of colour signifying, with the sensibility of hind-sight, the industrial slaughter of the Somme, Passchendaele and Gallipoli, which in 1914 was yet to come. We lifted them in performance, and in marking the beginning of the war, we acknowledged the endings our ghosts did not yet know, and in the lifting of the poppies, in the collision between our history and their future, in our knowing and their obliviousness, characters became actors again, and, what Rebecca Schneider terms 'theatrical time' stopped and slipped into real time (2011, p. 93), and as the bugle called out *The Last Post* and the poppies were lifted, actors and audience were united as a congregation in present time at what seemed more of a service of remembrance than a performance. This is what Schneider terms 'the simultaneous temporal registers' between past and present (2011, p. 8), and herein lies the awful dramatic irony of this duality of signification, beyond the distinctions between present-day actor, long-dead character and spectator. We were all gathered to remember, united in silence, and suddenly in a different kind of attention, or what Eli Rozik might term the deep thinking that parallels ritual (2002). It was always a sacred moment. Part of what enabled this process was the poppy itself with its powerful signification, although it has of late become a political minefield. I can't dwell on that here, but I will comment briefly on *Blood Swept Lands and Fields of Red* (Cummins and Piper 2014) and the power of the overwhelming number of poppies at the Tower, each representing a Commonwealth life lost. What fascinated me here were the responses this installation invoked: the ceramic poppies created a differentiated and sacred space to which visitors added their own offerings—poppies and crosses tied to the railings—like they do with votive candles in churches. When I visited, the crowds around the Tower were hushed; there was reverence. Here was the desire to add something to the installation, to participate in it *as* commemoration rather than look at it as aesthetic spectacle.

Over By Christmas touched a similar nerve: audiences flocked to it repeatedly, and actively participated: they sang the songs with us; even a setting of the famous fourth stanza of Binyon's 1914 poem, *For the Fallen*, featuring the well-known line, 'They Shall Grow Not Old', was newly composed, so that although the melody was unfamiliar, they mouthed the words. This rendered *Over By Christmas* a communal activity, and because the performers were from the communities we visited there was probably also a line of connection between performer and audience that was not disturbed by the aura or glamour that can attach itself to professional performers from other places far away performing local narratives. This is not about professional skill, but connection: the performers were all extremely skilled, but they were *of* the community; these were *their* train stations. They could have been the audience, and *vice versa*, and sometimes were. The soldiers who left from these platforms could have been their relatives. Indeed, when direct relatives of those named in the script did attend, there was an additional emotional charge.

The power of this piece was site-specificity, and community-specificity, overlaid onto the centenary anniversary of the 1914 entrainments. It was thus a confluence of specific time, specific place, specific people, operating as one of Eliade's fixed points, in which an hierophany—an act of manifestation of the sacred—can operate (Eliade 1987, p. 11). These moments flicker between what Frank Kermode denotes as *chronos*, or linear fictional time, and *kairos*, 'a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end' (2000, p. 47). Such confluences of connection define commemorative performances.

Remember Me and the Missing (2015)

The final piece in this discussion, *Remember Me*, differs from the previous two in that it is a miniature installation hosted in a vintage suitcase, and designed for an audience-of-one. It comprises: digital animations of original photographs projected into the suitcase; a Victorian photograph album, a page of which becomes a projection surface; a 1/35 scale model of a trench; and a layered scrim to realise 3D projection. The audience-of-one watches 12 min of animations projected by miniature pico-projectors. An accompanying soundtrack is delivered *via* headphones for an intimate and immersive audiovisual experience. *Remember Me* has been shown to date in St. Mary's Creative Space, Chester; Liverpool Bluecoat Gallery; Edge Hill University; Ansdell Library,

Lytham St. Annes; Narberth Museum; and Chester Military Museum (and is available by invitation to tour to private homes, studios, museums or art galleries).

If *Silent Night* and *Over by Christmas* were concerned with connection and community consensus, then *Remember Me* concerns the *loss* of connection and circumvents community consensus, for it asks its *solitary* viewer to consider the fragility of documentation and thus a person's (loss of) subjectivity, through an exploration of old photographs. For the 2014 production of *Silent Night*, I made performance projection made from original photography sourced on eBay, during which time I found *cartes de visite* photographs of Great War soldiers, and they haunted me. As Jay Winter writes: 'Old soldiers may fade away, but many of their photographs do not' (1914, p. 80). But such documentation is fallible: memories fade, photographs lose their connection with those they depict, and thus in time they foreground the fragility of knowledge, for the beautiful failure of photography is that it captures faces, uniforms, moments of leisure beside canvas tents, but not names, identities and biographies. As recollections of these disappear, photographs shift from being about subjects to being objects. The ones I bought have become anonymous collectors' items, desirable objects, and I have bought many examples, most depicting soldiers whose identities are lost: I felt I had to rescue them, for perhaps these are the first, last and only photographs ever taken of these sitters. So, *Remember Me* commemorates the swelling ranks of a different kind of unknown soldier (known unto God as the grave stones state): those who once were identified but are now forever unidentifiable.

Remember Me reanimates these figures, so unlike the archetypes of *Silent Night*, or the ghosts of *Over By Christmas*, these are accurate, light-etched traces of who they are supposed to be: source and performance are the same, and *via* Adobe Photoshop (graphics editor) and Adobe After Effects (VFX, motion graphics) they have become performances of themselves. Preparation for animation involved long hours in Photoshop, and I got to know the soldiers very well, but however hard I looked, they remained enigmatic mysteries. Because they are photographs, I used the analogue, photographic trope of the emergence of the latent image out of white paper. In a contextual essay, I state:

> The animations begin with the photographic image emerging from white, paralleling the chemical processes in developing a photograph.

> I foregrounded eyes, to signify looking and seeing, but also because in extreme Photoshop close up, and with several images open at once, I sometimes had the uncanny experience of forgetting which uniform these soldiers were wearing. (Newall 2014, online)

The liminal here was the strange space of knowing and not knowing the enlarged faces of these people. Staring at faces, I lost track of time: I experienced Czikszentmihalyi's *flow* (1992), a state whereby great concentration in an activity causes the individual to enter:

> … a subjective state with the following characteristics:
>
> - Intense and focused concentration on what one is doing in the present moment
> - Merging of action and awareness
> - Loss of reflective self-consciousness (i.e., loss of awareness of oneself as a social actor)
> - A sense that one can control one's actions; that is, a sense that one can in principle deal with the situation because one knows how to respond to whatever happens next
> - Distortion of temporal experience (typically, a sense that time has passed faster than normal)
> - Experience of the activity as intrinsically rewarding, such that often the end goal is just an excuse for the process. When in flow, the individual operates at full capacity. (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2009, p. 90)

This is pertinent because it parallels the *epoché* or differentiation discussed earlier as a prerequisite for commemoration, and in that differentiated time and space, it heightens the sense of the liminal and the sacred. The Photoshop process followed by the After Effects animation process of transposing long-dead soldiers from stillness into a facsimile of living activity became a different kind of extended and close-up looking, and this looking became commemoration in those moments of differentiation, in *flow*, in the 'performances'. And I am again indebted to Andrew Westerside, one of the first readers of this chapter, who noted that:

> …there is something interesting here in the languages of digital image manipulation: a digital image is always 'wet'—that is, never fixed and immovable in the way a developed photograph is 'dry'. To be a 'wet'

> image is to be always in a state unfinished, or a state of potential change. There seems an apt connection here with what *RM* does to the soldiers and their stories—wet/dry, subject/object, gone/returned, etc. (Westerside 2017, personal communication)

In bringing the soldiers back from the dead, by making them move or perform, Marvin Carlson's statement also comes to mind:

> The simultaneous attraction to and fear of the dead, the need continually to rehearse and renegotiate the relationship with memory and the past, is nowhere more specifically expressed in human culture than in theatrical performance. (Carlson 2003, p. 167)

Remember Me differs from *Silent Night* and *Over By Christmas* in that it shifts its audience from the comfortable consensus of crowd membership to direct and single communion with the creative artefact: there is no audience-crowd anonymity into which to dissolve as the work plays. The performance of soundscape and narrator is delivered by a pair of headphones, which, as Charles Stankievech notes (2007a), when used stereophonically can place sound around a listener in virtual space, but when used binaurally—as in *Remember Me*—reduces perceived distance between sound production and aural reception (both these forms being used to devastating effect in Simon McBurney's *The Encounter* (2015) for Complicité). Stankievech describes the binaural effect thus:

> …a sound field can be virtually located within the head. More accurately, space is created within the mass of the body where sound masses float in an impossible space. (2007a, p. 56)

In another paper, (2007b), Stankievech also argues for the link between this interiority and *epoché*. And herein lies the intimate and immediacy of the experience of *Remember Me*. The conjunction of images and soundscape—created by sound artist Karen Lauke—is an emotive force: the headphones separate the audience member from the inevitable ambient noise of the environment in which the installation is situated, for as John Cage (1947) has demonstrated, there is never silence; the two-minute silence at The Cenotaph is always punctuated by traffic sound, bird calls, coughing, the distant roar of planes. In the installation, however,

in the dark, with headphones, there is less disturbance; there is only intimate intentional sound and tiny visions. Epigrammatic texts at the beginning guide viewers to consider those they watch as *individuals* with life experiences of the Great War, and as *ghosts*, whose identities, and perhaps bodies, are now forever missing. It is an extremely direct experience, and many audience members weep after watching.

The intimacy also means that nobody applauds at the end, situating the experience in the zone of the sacred rather than the profane: but most want to speak about the experience—although they often comment about being 'speechless'—as if they need to have acknowledged the impact of the men seemingly coming alive again upon them, because for a moment, the stillness of history and death and photography has been de-familiarised by being made strange. I ask people to comment in a visitors' book: they write that it is, 'poignant', 'sad', 'haunting', 'powerful'; they write about the shock of seeing the movements; about the tribute it makes to the soldiers; and a word that recurs is 'breath-taking', which recalls the held breath of *epoché* discussed earlier. And I feel I can say all this because it does not feel like mine: it's as if I have not created it, but curated it, and made the soldiers within the photographs visible once again: my artistry has been to pause the breath and in that pause make connection and thus commemoration possible.

There is emotional impact and commemoration in all three productions.

Commemoration occurred via connection and moments of *epoché* or sacred differentiation of time and space, but most vitally, the circuit of connection that such pauses or differentiations make possible. But why does connection matter?

Bruce Hood has written in *Supersense* (2009) about objects, authenticity and connectedness: he claims that objects (such as the diary I was holding in the Military Museum archive) have an intrinsic value above their material worth, which Hood supposes comes from our sense of what it is to be unique: an object once owned by someone is a link to *their* uniqueness. *Via* this link it has an irreplaceable authenticity:

> By owning objects and touching them, we can connect with others and that gives us the sense of distributed existence over time and with others. The net effect is that we become increasingly linked together by a sense of deeper hidden structures. (Hood 2009, p. 235)

Hood claims that the authenticity of the object is vital because without it there is no true connection to the past. If we transpose this theory to performance, then authentic site is as potent as an authentic object: this would explain the power of being *in situ* on station platforms rather than in a performative space—a theatre stage, a village hall—which, while symbolically representing somewhere else, is inauthentic. Being *in situ* in such performative circumstances, performing acts previously performed there in memory of previous times, renders places into palimpsests, and foregrounds landscape or location as multi-temporal, referencing other voices, other bodies, and other actions that have gone before. This is powerful: Eliade says, 'the religious experience of the nonhomogeneity of space is a primordial experience' (1987, pp. 21–22).

The pieces in the above reflection lead me to conclude that there is a difference between *marking* an anniversary and *commemorating* an anniversary. The power to do this lies in the temporal and spatial connections we make in the co-incidence of time and place via anniversaries and site-specific locality and the aura of authenticity. This enables a sacred sensation of commemoration in an *epoché* in the homogeneity of time and space. This is the moment when the profane becomes sacred.

I conclude also that commemoration can occur not just in the product of performer or artist in relationship with participant audience member, but also within the praxis and process of the artist, and (for all the suspicions of its fallacies) in authorial intention: I marked the anniversaries, but I commemorated as I wrote, as I Photoshopped, and as I animated, because during these processes I experienced Csikszentmihalyi's *flow*, and otherness, and ultimately reverence for those I wrote and made art about: time was differentiated as I looked at faces, and as I wrote about No Man's Land, shifting the register of the writing from prose to poetry. Each instance is characterised by a loss of the self and the invocation of liminality in thresholds of time and space. Liminality is crucial: Ralph Yarrow, citing D. E. R. George, states:

> Performances occur on and enable spectators to sit on the thresholds—ambiguous time-spaces in-between. (Yarrow 2007, p. 15)

These thresholds exist in the differentiated times and spaces between: the living and the dead; the 'full emptiness' of the void (to quote Carl Lavery: in Yarrow 2007, p. 20); the nowhere that is everywhere of No

Man's Land; the familiar rendered unfamiliar. For in the familiar made strange, when we hold our breaths, we connect the circuits between what is then and what is now, and we remember what we have not experienced. We commemorate.

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PART II

Staging History: Dramaturgy, Remembering, Forgetting

CHAPTER 5

Making *Bolero*: Dramaturgies of Remembrance

Michael Pinchbeck

Drip. Drip. Drip. 14 February 1984. Valentine's Day. I fall over outside a Fish and Chip shop in Nottingham. I get a black eye. My dad carries me home on his shoulders. My mum gives me some ice cubes wrapped in an old tea towel to hold against my face and switches on the Black and White television. I hear music before I see the image fizzing into life. Torvill and Dean are dancing to Bolero at the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo. When I hear the music now I remember the fall, the smell of fish and chips and the feeling of watching the world from my father's shoulders. I remember the tears rolling down my cheeks and the cold of the ice against my face as I watched two people from our home town dancing on ice somewhere very far away. I remember the pain. I remember the cold. I remember the ice melting. Drip. Drip. Drip. (Pinchbeck 2014)

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Overture: A Ravelling of Memory

This chapter reflects on *Bolero* (2014), a multi-lingual, devised performance I directed in 2014 exploring war, conflict and the genealogy of music made in the UK, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo. It was a biography of *Bolero* (1928) by Maurice Ravel and the text above was the beginning of the show. For this chapter, I explore working in these cultural contexts and weaving together dramaturgies of remembrance. I discuss conflicts inherent in the way multiple narratives of the piece are interwoven to address the way the Bosnian War and the Siege of Sarajevo (1992–1995) was overlooked in the West at the time. I highlight strategies employed to make the show and draw on Dragan Klaić's 'Theater in Crisis? Theater of Crisis!' (Delgado and Svich 2002, p. 150), where he writes about the catalysing role theatre plays in times of conflict and as resistance during war. I ask what license we have to tell other peoples' stories and what agency devised work gives people to narrate personal experience. Simply put, I ask: what permission do we have to tell other peoples' stories when they cut across histories, cultures and memories beyond our own? By cultures and histories, I mean not just our religious or European heritage, but also our theatre (Fig. 5.1).

Bolero was as much a convergence of different theatrical traditions as it was a meeting place of people from diverse socio-cultural-ethno-political backgrounds. Each of us brought this heritage to the making process and, in doing so, paid attention to the unstable and unfixed axis where the commemorative and the performative meet. *Bolero* asked how an inter-cultural, devised performance could remember; a piece of music, a time or a place. It was an 'interweaving, or 'raveling', of performance cultures into and with the fabric of memory as an evolution of the intercultural theoretical paradigm (Ficher-Lichte *et al.* 2014). We might define *Bolero* as sitting within the context of international contemporary performance practice, we might see it within this context as Practice as Research asking a number of questions about the relationship between the composition of music and the dramaturgy of performance. We might define it as intercultural devised performance and I would agree with Rhustom Barucha's recent claims that 'interweaving' is 'a *doing*, one of the many ways of practising or performing the 'intercultural'' (Bharucha 2014, p. 179) and, as such, in this chapter I will focus on the '*doing*'.

I will compare the deterioration of Ravel's mental health with the impact of conflict on the city of Sarajevo, and how *Bolero* connected

Fig. 5.1 Performers raise small signs spelling 'Bolero', reminiscent of figure skating score-cards. In performance at Nottingham European Arts and Theatre (neat) festival (*Bolero* [2014]) (Image: Julian Hughes)

music and war. It was devised with an international cast and toured to Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo after its premiere at Nottingham Playhouse as part of neat14[1] in May 2014. It was performed in Sarajevo on 28 June: the centenary of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. The performance features that assassination and follows the ricochet of the gunshot that triggered the First World War through 100 years of history, to the 1984 Winter Olympics to the Bosnian War to the present day. I sought to shine a light on the tragedy that consumed Sarajevo in the 1990s and I invited Bosnian actors, who lived through the war, to share their experiences as part of the process. The cast included a German actor, two British actors, three Bosnian actors and 20 local community performers from the East Midlands region who represented the company in the original ballet of *Bolero* (1928), commissioned for *L'Opera Garnier* by prima ballerina, Ida Rubinstein.

[1] Nottingham European Arts and Theatre Festival.

The style of the work we made together was non-linear, non-matrixed and post-dramatic; devising was a new experience for the Bosnian actors who usually work with directors on play texts. The Western model I employed was to generate as much material as possible and then share it as work-in-progress to gain audience feedback. As such, there was sometimes a *conflict of styles* as well as *narratives of conflict* implicit in the devising process. There were occasional breakdowns of communication and moments of tension. One of the Bosnian actors told me that I was like a reluctant director, I replied that he was like a reluctant actor. The role of the director, in this inter-cultural context, is to seek ways in which theatre-making might assimilate a shared language that cuts across cultural and theatrical tradition. We always worked to the music of *Bolero* (1928) to 'stick to the tempo'. Every day, we started rehearsal by warming up to the music. This instilled in our collective memory a rhythm that would inform the dramaturgy of the work. This chapter seeks to explore how dramaturgies of remembrance are composed. In order to do this, it helps to understand the contextual history of the music.

First Movement: A Biography of *Bolero*

The original version of Ravel's *Bolero* (1928) takes 17 minutes to perform depending on how the conductor keeps time. On 4 May 1930, Toscanini conducted *Bolero* (1928) with the New York Philharmonic in Paris as part of a European tour. His tempo was significantly faster than Ravel preferred. Ravel signalled his disapproval by refusing to respond to Toscanini's gesture during the audience ovation. An exchange took place between both men backstage after the concert. According to one account Ravel said, 'It's too fast', to which Toscanini responded 'You don't know anything about your own music. It's the only way to save the work'. According to another report Ravel said, 'That's not my tempo'. Toscanini replied 'When I play it at your tempo, it is not effective', to which Ravel retorted 'Then do not play it'. The dynamics in the score read 'Moderato' and Ravel always reminded conductors to 'stick to the tempo'. The only recording that does that is one he conducted himself. It lasts exactly 17 minutes and sounds like a train. It was inspired by rhythms of machinery, factories and gunfire. You hear this in the beat of the side drum (Fig. 5.2).

Robert Donia in *Sarajevo—A Biography* (2006) writes about when the city of Sarajevo was besieged by Serbian Forces in 1992 that '…

Fig. 5.2 (Foreground) Ollie Smith as composer Maurice Ravel and (rear) Jasenko Pašić and Amela Terzimehić as Jane Torvill and Christopher Dean. In performance at Nottingham European Arts and Theatre (neat) festival (*Bolero* [2014]) (Image: Julian Hughes)

the attacks were unmistakably directed against the city's chief institutions of collective memory, leading some observers to characterize these attacks as "memoricide"… shattering civic pride by wiping out records and physical manifestations of the city's diverse history' (Donia 2006, p. 315). One of the first targets was the City Hall, the exact place Archduke Franz Ferdinand visited before he was assassinated in 1914. In 1992, a symbol of both the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires that overlapped in the city, it was the largest library in Eastern Europe housing an estimated five million books. The first few days of the war were waged in a fog as the dust of these burning books rained down on the city. To commemorate the centenary of the assassination in 2014, the City Hall was rebuilt and hosted a concert featuring the music Ravel wrote inspired by war.

Music and conflict have always been interwoven in the city's history. The Cellist of Sarajevo famously played the same piece every day during the war to mark the spot where a shell fell on a market place.

The conductor Zuba Mehtin conducted Mozart's *Requiem* in the ruins of City Hall during the Siege of Sarajevo. We recall this event in the performance, a Bosnian actor playing the role of Mehta, walks across rubble to the sound of gunfire and shelling, raises his baton and starts to conduct the opening movement of the *Requiem*.

> An arc of strings: violins to the right, cellos to the left, woodwind in the centre. Around the orchestra is the choir; almost more performers than audience. The conductor, Zubin Mehta, stands proud at the front. He works himself into a frenzy. The orchestra is framed by ruins. Broken pillars, blown out windows, burnt books. Tonight a concert. Tomorrow a trip to find water, food, shelter, safety. This is a requiem for five million books. This is a requiem for 11,541 people. This is the requiem. (Pinchbeck 2014)

Second Movement: A Litany for a City

5 February 1994. A bomb explodes in the main market square in Sarajevo killing 68 and wounding 144 people. It is the worst single atrocity in the conflict. The 120 mm shell lands on a stall in the packed open-air market just before noon. The attack comes on the day leaders are meeting in the city to discuss its future exactly 10 years after the Winter Olympics opening ceremony. It takes place during a ceasefire. There is now a memorial that marks the spot where the shell fell. When British journalists file their stories about the bombing, it is relegated to second on the news after a royal divorce. It frustrated me that more people in Nottingham know Sarajevo for the Winter Olympics in 1984 than what happened next to the city and the Bosnian War that tore it apart. The conflict took place in a cultural and personal blind-spot. *Bolero* (2014) is both a eulogy for lost lives and an apology for not knowing enough about them. In these terms, it joins an established canon of twentieth-century British theatre including Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995) and Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997).

John Berger writes 'To understand a landscape, one has to situate oneself in it' (Berger 1972, p. 4). He is talking about painting, but it serves as a useful metaphor for the devising process and we could take it to mean culturally and geographically. We worked with Bosnian artist and theatre director, Haris Pasovic, as a dramaturg on the project who was involved in projects at the time of the Bosnian War. His input

ensured that we were more aware of historical and contemporaneous acts of remembrance that took place in Sarajevo. Another dramaturg, Florent Mehmeti, enabled us to understand cultural gestures of remembrance inherent in the Balkans. As well as prayer at a grave, one might also place one's hand on one's heart to remember someone. Every year, in Sarajevo, a reading takes place of the names of those who died during the siege. It is a register of remembrance passed down through the generations so they may never forget. It is a litany for a city, a verbal memorial of loss, a roll-call for three years of lost life. As Berger writes: 'storytellers are Death's Secretaries' (Berger 2005, p. 31).

In Klaić's 'Theatre of Resistance' (2002), he writes about making a piece of work—*Sarajevo, Tales from a City* (1993)—casting the city as both a martyr and a hero. He describes that, 'Instead of rehearsing with an international cast and performing to the audiences across Europe in a production about the war… he had an urge to create theatre in Sarajevo, with his colleagues and students, for Sarajevans, as a form of spiritual resistance and moral encouragement' (Delgado and Swich 2002, p. 150). This theatre, he realised, was not reaching 'to the very core of the pain and horror of the war' but 'developing a discourse around the catastrophe' (ibid.). To contribute to this discourse, nearly 20 years after Klaić's work, *Bolero* (2014) was performed in Sarajevo on the centenary of the assassination supported by the British Council and Arts Council England. It simultaneously marked 100 years since the start of one conflict in Sarajevo while commemorating another.

In February 2012, I made a research trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was snowing when I visited Sarajevo War Theatre for the first time. Up a steep hill not far from the ice stadium, a young man cleared the snow from the theatre's doorway. I asked him if this was the theatre and he said 'This is the Sarajevo War Theatre so we are used to worse than this' (Pinchbeck 2013, p. 420). In England, when it snows the show is cancelled. In Sarajevo, the show must go on. He told me that during the war, there was a show every night of the 1425-day siege. Again, this agitates the troubling and troubled axis between the performative and the commemorative. It provokes questions such as; was this performance as a commemoration of normalcy? A commemoration of peace? A commemoration of silence? A commemoration of safety? A commemoration of what might yet be again? There were gasps of pleasure in the audience when someone lit a cigarette onstage. Theatre there was an escape route from the tragedy of the everyday. Theatre there was a reminder

of the world outside endless war. There were three casts for *Waiting for Godot* in case one of the actors was killed during the run. If a shell fell, they waited for dust to settle, lights to come back on and carried on with the show. As Klaić writes about making his performances in Sarajevo at the time,

> It went further than squeezing empathy from the audience; it reinforced the sense of responsibility and metaphorized the urban texture, and life-style and values being destroyed in Sarajevo. It did not attempt to compete with the gruesome television images that had by then become commonplace, but individualized the peril, reinforced and transmitted the anguish. (Delgado and Svich 2002, p. 150)

For *Bolero* (2014), I 'metaphorized' the composition of Ravel to tell the story of how a piece of music, inspired by the First World War, could soundtrack both 1984 Olympic success and the sound of a city under constant fire. According to one of the actors who lived through the siege, there was never silence. The mountains around the city amplified every explosion so the city's gradual destruction became its own heartbeat.

> 6 April 2012. Twenty years after the siege began. They close the main street in Sarajevo. More than 100 trucks filled with red plastic chairs enter the city. It takes six hours to set up 825 rows over nearly one kilometre. 11,541 red chairs. One for every citizen killed under the siege. 643 small chairs for all the children who died. On some of them during the event, passers-by leave red roses, teddy bears, ice skates, plastic cars, candy or toys. At 2 pm a concert begins. Called *A Concert for Nobody*. An orchestra starts to play to the 11,541 empty chairs. On this bright, sunny day it starts to rain… (Pinchbeck 2014)

One of the performers in *Bolero* (2014) told this story as part of the show. He helped to put out the chairs on that morning in 2012. They called it *The Red Line*. It was conceived by the artist, Haris Pasovic, our dramaturg. They did not have enough red chairs in Sarajevo so they borrowed them from Serbia.

Klaić concludes that, 'Theatre needs time to distance itself from the event in the reality it wants to address. After the war, with some breathing space recovered, some time-distance built in, theatre would have more of a chance to dramatize wartime experience' (Delgado and Swich

2002, p. 150). For *Bolero*, I told a story that used Ravel's music as a bridge to weave my childhood memory of falling over outside a Fish and Chip shop in Nottingham to Torvill and Dean, to Paris, to Sarajevo. The piece invoked a narrative of ruins, or a ruining of narrative, juxtaposing the destruction of Sarajevo with the premature decay of Ravel's neurological condition that led to his early death. The piece had a dramaturgy driven by the music and a century of creativity and conflict that ran through it like a golden thread. It was easier to tell this story with Klaić's 'time-distance' of 20 years since the war, 30 years since the Olympics and 100 years since the assassination, but emotions are still raw. As such, it felt appropriate to remain a 'reluctant director' and find appropriate ways to voice these hi/stories. We were telling stories that reflected the complicated landscape. As Berger writes,

> Landscapes can be deceptive. Sometimes a landscape seems to be less a setting for a life of its inhabitants than a curtain behind which their struggles, achievements and accidents take place. For those who, with the inhabitants, are behind the curtain, landmarks are no longer only geographic but also biographical and personal. (Berger 1967, p. 4)

I spoke to the actors from Sarajevo War Theatre about why they made so much theatre about the war and they said 'How can we not?'. Then they asked me, 'What do you have to make theatre about?' and I said 'This'. Matthew Goulish wrote, 'Some words speak of events. Other words, events make us speak' (Goulish 2000, p. 152). These are the words events made us speak. Whether the lived memory of crawling across a runway as tracer fire lights up the night sky. Or the more trivial memory I shared of listening to Radiohead's *Creep* in 1994 while news broke of a massacre in a Sarajevo marketplace.

Where shells fell across Sarajevo, the holes in the pock-marked pavements were filled with red wax to make them look like flower petals. The streets there bleed flowers. They call them Sarajevo Roses. Our performance of *Bolero* (2014) ended with red roses falling onstage like flowers on a grave, like flowers at the end of an ice dance routine. It is only after making the show and choreographing a dance sequence with two Bosnian actors that collided Torvill and Dean's ice dance routine with the rituals of a body being laid to rest during the war, that I realised how Torvill and Dean's routine could be interpreted. It was a dance of death. In some ways, it foreshadowed the brutal conflict that was to come.

Third Movement: A Dance of Death

During the devising process, we discussed the politicality of remains inherent in the way narratives and soundtracks are interwoven. For example, a story of Ravel lost in the woods outside Verdun in 1914 listening to the sound of gunfire, is blended with music from the 1984 Winter Olympics Opening Ceremony. We suggest Ravel's experience of the First World War informed the rhythm of his music, including *Bolero* (1928). For this chapter, I have highlighted these devising methodologies of juxtaposition and collision as an interweaving of dynamic and aesthetic strategies to explore loss. The Bosnian cast of *Bolero* (2014), who lived through the war, shared their experiences of the Siege of Sarajevo and this addressed the act of 'memoricide' that took place there (Donia 2006, p. 315). Their narratives allowed us to explore the materiality of memory and weave our dramaturgies of remembrance.

A post-dramatic performance is working implicitly with notions of recycling, reusing or upcycling material and it became clear how 'sequelising' work may be a solution to making this process more visible onstage (Lehmann 2006). How one theatre project leads to another, one piece of music leads to another, one war leads to another, and we are caught between the past, the present and the future. Flowers on the ice in 1984 become flowers left behind on a grave in 1994. The dramaturgies of remembrance that informed the piece, conjured ghosts of music and cities where one conflict has rewritten the bullet holes of another. To capture this in performance, we made manifest these iterations onstage in three theatrical movements, to mark one historical narrative replacing another. In our *mise en scene*, a red velvet curtain (Paris 1928) revealed a cardboard wall (Sarajevo 1992–1995) which revealed a pock-marked, shell damaged, concrete wall (Sarajevo 2014). In front of this wall, two Bosnian performers re-enacted Torvill and Dean's ice dance routine to the rhythm of the side drum. As they danced, we wrote *Sarajevski Ruze* (Sarajevo Roses) on the wall. It became funereal. It called to mind the fact that bodies were buried outside the ice stadium during the Siege. Funerals could only last 15 minutes in case mourners became the next targets for snipers (Fig. 5.3). As David Savran writes about The Wooster Group's work in *Breaking the Rules*, 'theatre is always a dance of absence and substitution, a dance of death' (Savran 2005).

In the 1990s, pre-social media, Sarajevo seemed a world away and yet was only a two-hour flight from Vienna. Writing this now, post-Brexit,

Fig. 5.3 Amila Terzimehić in a scene depicting the Bosnian War. In performance at Nottingham European Arts and Theatre (neat) festival (*Bolero* [2014]) (Image: Julian Hughes)

post-Trump, and as we mark the 20th anniversary of the end of the siege and with an ongoing refugee crisis, does Europe risk becoming even more disjointed? As a British artist working in Bosnia, I was always made to feel welcome as it was recognised that I was trying to tell their story in their words. For *Bolero*, as the cast involved were an inter-cultural ensemble of British, German, Bosnian and Dutch practitioners, our shared language was theatre-making and our vocabulary was physical rather than verbal. We spent more time making the work, often without speaking, than talking about it. In the way that Goat Island described their process: 'The dialogue is the work' (Pinchbeck 2006, p. 5). We might also conclude that without a shared language, the work is the dialogue.

One of the actors in Klaić's project, *Sarajevo, Tales From a City* (1993), Damjana Cerne, writes about her reason for being involved: 'I had an urge to do something for the city… which was being destroyed in front of our very eyes, we were all watching it on T.V, it all hurt and irritated me very much… I knew I had to talk about it, fight against it… as an actress, and artist I had to set up a discourse in that

sleeping Europe, people needed to have an opinion on it, the killing and destruction… it had to be stopped' (Bilić 2009, p. 19). One of the actors in *Bolero* (2014), Amila Terzimehic speaks of being involved in similar ways 20 years later, she said: 'I sincerely hope this play will take the audience back to their roots and encourage us to start thinking about what Bosnia and Herzegovina really is. My generation doesn't know much about these things' (Terzimehic 2014). Her memories of growing up during the siege were shared in the piece. The British performers told the stories of living through the siege. The Bosnian performers told my story of listening to Radiohead in 1994 in the UK.

Coda: Unravelling a Memory

In the latter years of his life, Ravel suffered from Pick's disease. Due to the development of primary progressive aphasia, he began to find it impossible to notate despite the creative part of his brain still very much functioning. He had material—*music*—swimming around in his head, but no longer the means to express it. Towards the end of his career, certain qualities of the music he composed seemed to change, it became more atonal, more discordant, more syncopated, more melancholy, for example, both *Piano Concerto in D for the Left Hand* (1929–1930) and *Piano Concerto in G* (1929–1931).

In 1932, Ravel suffered major head trauma in a taxi accident, after which, he began experiencing absent-mindedness and other symptoms linked to aphasia. It is debated as to whether it was this accident or the onset of Pick's disease that was responsible for the symptoms. It may well have been as early as 1928, when Ravel was writing *Bolero*, that he began experiencing the early stages of dementia. We might be able to detect in the rhythm of the music, something unravelling, something coming undone. As Ravel himself said at the time 'It is a piece of music with no music in it'. Ravel's memory itself was degrading and, like the city of Sarajevo, his sentient ability was under siege. He was suffering from his own 'memoricide'. As Andrew Westerside writes of the work, 'And so his music at the same time as being a 'present' artefact also commemorates what he can't remember? The notes he chooses are at the same time stagings of the ones he's lost?' (Westerside, personal communication, 28 April 2018).

Underpinning the piece, was my own autobiographical memory of watching Torvill and Dean dance to *Bolero* on TV in 1984 and then visiting the Zetra Ice Stadium in 2012 to find that the place where they

won gold was in disrepair. One of the most marked traces of the scars left behind on Sarajevo's streets is the war memorial for the resistance in the Second World War riddled with bullet holes from the siege in the 1990s. Our task was to bear witness to this complex palimpsest of memories. To do this, the verb, 'to ravel' inspired the devising process which involved weaving together different narratives connected to the music, from the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in 1914 to Torvill and Dean winning Olympic Gold in 1984 to the present-day city. The dramaturgical process for this project was entirely focused on a weaving together of different narrative threads into a tapestry of remembrance.

Bolero (2014) triggered a trilogy of works inspired by Ravel's music, it was followed by *Concerto* (2016) and *Solo* (2017). Though designed as individual projects, they exist as a triptych, and each takes a different piece of music inspired by the First World War. The music acts as a dynamic narrative that the audience follows like a score. Like the sound of a gunshot on the streets of Sarajevo that triggered 100 years of conflict etched upon a city. Drawing on interweaving performance cultures as an evolution of the inter-cultural theoretical paradigm (Fischer-Lichte et al. 2014), I describe working on these projects' dramaturgies as akin to Eugenio Barba's notion of 'a weaving together' of found and fictional texts about music with musical motifs (Barba 1985, p. 76).

We might consider their dramaturgy to be like this piece of writing. It hides its own working in the same way, like a tapestry. It has been drafted and redrafted, its fonts changed, its word count going up and down like the tide, fluctuating with every edit. Track Changes comments have come and gone in the margins and the sub-headings have been re-worded. None of this is now visible. And by the time this chapter appears in our publication, all that effort will be forgotten. Only the words which will be remembered will be left to be read. Words these events made us speak. The text below was the end of the show.

> Drip. Drip. Drip. The ice stadium where Torvill and Dean won gold in 1984 was bombed during the Bosnian War. It was used as an army base. Used as a morgue. The seats were turned into coffins. The dead were buried there. Then moved to the nearby hills. Now children skate over where children died. As you leave Sarajevo by air you look down at the city from above and you see where thousands of bodies were buried during the war. You think about that gunshot fired in 1914 and how it is still being heard

> today. When I visit the ice stadium in 2012 it is still being used for ice skating but faded Olympic logos are riddled with bullet holes. The roof is leaking so there are five plastic buckets left out to catch the rain falling onto the ice. Drip. Drip. Drip. (Pinchbeck 2014)

To conclude, I consider *Bolero* as a bringing together of the performative and the commemorative to both remember and stage the loss experienced by a city, a country, a composer. It is perhaps no coincidence that the *tempo* to which Ravel was so adamant that conductors conform translates literally as *time*. If *Bolero* stages this loss to reflect upon commemoration through performance, it is through understanding Berger's sense of landscape and inhabiting it and Ravel's sense of *tempo* and adhering to it. There is an element of Klaić's 'time-distance' here, as we move further away from conflict the potential to make theatre about it grows to counter the erasure of memory that it attempted. If this is the case, then perhaps to commemorate through performance, to stage loss, seeks to repair the 'memoricide' that took place. Now as we move further away from the performance, its memory is folded for me into the anniversaries that it marked—an archive of commemoration.

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CHAPTER 6

Andrew Bovell in the History Wars: Australia's Continuing Cultural Crisis of Remembering and Forgetting

Donald Pulford

A range of narratives jostle for prominence in the process of nation-building, but they do so with a special intensity in a post-colonial nation due to the foundational drama of loss at its core. Narratives of possession and dispossession, dominance, identity, resistance, overcoming, survival and so on, either justify a post-colonial present or condemn it. Patterns of remembering and forgetting are a special feature of this process, inclining a population to enough unanimity for a viable nation to emerge. For Paul Connerton, 'It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that their memories of a society's past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions' (1989, p. 3). Suppression and/or forgetting are obviously crucial. The nineteenth century French historian, Ernest Renan, explained the importance of forgetting:

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> Forgetting, I would even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation and it is for this reason that the progress of historical studies often poses a threat to nationality. Historical inquiry, in effect, throws light on the violent acts that have taken place at the origin of every political formation, even those that have been the most benevolent in their consequences. Unity is always brutally established. (speech given in 1882; published in 1992, p. 3)

In a post-colonial context, the ascendant narrative is first determined by the invading culture, but this narrative's supremacy is unstable and may weaken if the voices of the dispossessed come to be heard and splits occur in the dominant culture regarding its relationship to those voices. While the establishment of certain narratives above others may or may not be brutal, it is seldom, if ever, successful over time. Connerton points out an unsettling repercussion of the emergence of narratives of loss regarding the foundation of the post-colonial state:

> … if past injustice has shaped the structure of a society's present arrangements for holding property in various ways – or analogously if it is held that past injustice has shaped the structure of a society's arrangements for founding its sovereignty – the question arises as to what now, if anything, ought to be done to rectify these injustices. What kind of criminal blame and what obligations do the performers of past injustice have towards those whose position is worse than it would have been had the injustice not been perpetrated? How far back must you go in taking account of the memory of past injustice, in wiping clean the historical record of illegitimate acts? To construct a barrier between the new beginning and the old tyranny is to recollect the old tyranny. (1989, pp. 9–10)

In common with other post-colonial countries in which the invading cultures have a continuing supremacy but whose position is made tenuous by the increasingly insistent voices of the dispossessed and their supporters, there is an ongoing anxiety in Australia concerning possession, loss and legitimacy. This chapter first backgrounds Andrew Bovell's *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* (2001) by describing the absurd performances of possession with which Australia was founded before the violent business of territorial annexation began. It then demonstrates the narrative volatilities involved in commemorating the start of European settlement of the country before presenting a treatment of cultural skirmishes about Australia's past in the History Wars, the name given to the historical controversy that erupted around the 1994 exhibition at the Smithsonian

Museum to commemorate the ending of the Pacific War in 1944. While the American History Wars concerned justifications for the nuclear attack on Japan, the Australian version focused on race relations and the settlement/invasion of the continent. Having described the Australian narratives involved, the chapter positions *Holy Day* in the immediate circumstances of the History Wars and the longer term cultural difficulties of which they were, and are, a part.

Three major performances of (dis)possession took place at the foundation of what became the continent and country, Australia. While they vary regarding setting and size of cast, they all contain the reverential raising of a piece of cloth asserting the authority of a distant country's king and claiming for him vast amounts of other people's land. The first was performed by the great navigator, Captain James Cook, on a small island off the northern tip of the continent on 20 August 1770. His journal records that he and his party climbed a hill on the island now called Possession Island,

> … hoisted English Colours, and in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third took possession of the whole Eastern coast from the above Latitude [38°South] down to this place … together with all the Bays, Harbours, Rivers, and Islands, situated upon the said Coast; after which we fired 3 Volleys of small Arms, which were answer'd by the like number from the Ship. (Cook 1770)

In doing so, Cook had asserted possession of over five-and-a-half thousand miles of coastline. He limited his ambitions to the east of the continent because 'on the Western side I can make no new discovery, the honour of which belongs to the Dutch Navigators' (ibid.). It is not known what the island's Kaurareg people made of this, but, if they witnessed the ceremony at all, we can be fairly sure that, unable to read the codes of the performance, they would not have concluded that they had been dispossessed.

The next flag raisings occurred in Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788 and on 7 February, almost two weeks later. They were performed on the arrival of the First Fleet, the vanguard of British settlement/invasion. While most of the fleet waited in the harbour, the expedition's leader, Governor Arthur Phillip, went ashore to prepare. An account published in the following year describes it thus:

> In the evening of the 26th the colours were displayed on shore, and the Governor, with several of his principal officers and others, assembled round the flag-staff, drank the king's health, and success to the settlement, with all that display of form which on such occasions is esteemed propitious, because it enlivens the spirits, and fills the imagination with pleasing presages. (Stockdale 1789, p. 58)

The flag-raising on the 7 February occurred once the whole company had landed.

Whatever they made of Governor Phillip's ceremonies, it is unlikely that the Cadigal people of the Eora nation who may have witnessed the two flag-raisings would have experienced 'pleasing presages' when it became clear that these interlopers were not going to leave. That dispossession was occurring would have been very soon obvious to them and their experience was eventually replicated across the vast island as between half a million and one million original occupants, speakers of 250 distinct language groups, encountered the dark repercussions of the white invasion.

The narratives flowing from these foundational performances have been of two opposing types. Both of them respond to unresolved and broadly racial tension between descendants of people who have occupied the island continent for at least 65,000 years and those who have come to it over the last two-and-a-half centuries. For Aborigines, it has been and is a story of loss, while the settler/invaders are torn between forgetful triumphalism and a more conscience-ridden approach that acknowledges foundational and subsequent wrongs as a first step in achieving reconciliation. The issues have been listed in this way: 'Was Australia settled or invaded? Pioneered or conquered? Won by sweat or won by blood? Was it the fruit of industry or a prize of war?' (Reynolds 1987, p. 3). In a 1993 lecture, the Australian historian, Geoffrey Blainey, characterised the triumphalist first narrative as having a 'Three Cheers' approach while the conscience-ridden second narrative seems to have a 'Black Armband' mood.

According to the 'Three Cheers' view of Australian history, when the British arrived in 1788, they encountered effectively an empty country: no fences; no markings of any kind to indicate ownership; no permanent settlements; small bands of people moving about it, hunting and gathering; no farming as it might be understood in Europe; a people

so primitive that there was no recognisable government to negotiate with. This last aspect of Australia at the time of the British arrival gave rise to the myth of '*terra nullius*', the idea that, though Australia was clearly occupied when Britain claimed the territory, the inhabitants were too primitive to be properly considered owners. Therefore, the territory was legally an empty country and the British were settling it rather than invading. Followers of the 'Three Cheers' narrative emphasise achievements since European settlement such as the creation of a prosperous country from unpromising, penal beginnings. More recently, there has also been an attempt to integrate Aborigines into this celebratory schema.

The other narrative has it that the British did not acquire Australia through settlement: it was an invasion. The British incursion was, at all times, underpinned by the threat and actual use of arms against the native occupants, the real owners of the land. Adherents to the 'Black Armband' view accuse triumphalists of overlooking the widespread resistance to white occupation and that the dispossession of the Aborigines was achieved through murder, massacre, displacement, disease, kidnap and indifference.

As moods and approaches change in Australia, the achievements that the 'Three Cheers' side emphasises fail to outweigh the wrongs to which the 'Black Armband' approach draws attention. The losses for Aboriginal people involve social and cultural disruption, displacement and poverty. Aborigines were not even counted as Australian in their own land until 1967. In five of the six states and territories, Aborigines could not move freely or receive award wages. In three of them, they could not marry freely, control their own children, own property freely and, in none of them, could they drink alcohol. Aborigines were effectively infantilised. In the mid-1990s, public awareness of, and sympathy for, Aborigines was greatly influenced by the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families which was instituted in 1995 and handed down its report in 1997. From the 1890s to the 1970s, between a tenth and a third of Aboriginal children, especially those of mixed race, were stolen from their families at birth or kidnapped later in an attempt to have Aborigines assimilate into white society. These people are known as the Stolen Generations. This is how one of them, Laura Cabullo, recalls her abduction with 16 other children:

> They grabbed us and put us in the back of a truck. As the truck left Phillip Creek everyone was crying and screaming. I remember mothers beating their heads with sticks and rocks. They were bleeding. They threw dirt over themselves. We were all crying in the truck, too. I remember seeing the mothers chasing the truck from Phillip Creek screaming and crying. And then they disappeared in the dust of the truck. (Knightley 2001, p. 114)

The conflict between these two narratives has long been a feature of Australian culture, though the forgetful 'Three Cheers' story enjoyed a long ascendancy founded on silence and forgetting. In the 1968 Boyer Lecture, 'After the Dreaming', Australian anthropologist, W. E. H. Stanner, noted 'The Great Australian Silence' regarding race. Observing the then almost total absence of Aborigines in overviews of Australian culture, he asserted that 'inattention on such a scale cannot possibly be explained by absent-mindedness. It is a structural matter' (Stanner 1969, p. 24). He continued, 'What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale' (ibid., pp. 24–25). The lecture warned about such forgetfulness concerning race: 'Like many another fact overlooked, or forgotten, or reduced to an anachronism, and thus consigned to the supposedly inconsequential past, it requires only a suitable set of conditions to come to the surface, and be very consequential indeed' (ibid., p. 27).

Such circumstances occurred in the lead up to and long aftermath of commemorations of the bicentenary of the British invasion/settlement of Australia, in 1988. While the then Prime Minister hoped that the bicentenary would be used as a celebration of 'positive achievements and triumph over adversity' (in Macintyre and Clark 2003, p. 99), it unleashed a storm of debate about race and Australian history along lines described earlier. Borrowing from the name given to similar skirmishes in the US, the episode is termed 'The History Wars'. There were fights about how school books described the invasion or settlement, the labelling and style of exhibits in the National Museum, partisan appointments to national cultural bodies. Though addressing the suppression and loss of memory in more obviously totalitarian settings, there is much in common with Connerton's description and what happened in Australia during this flare-up of the History Wars: 'Contemporary writers are proscribed, historians are dismissed from their posts, and the people

who have been silenced and removed from their jobs become invisible and forgotten' (1989, pp. 14–15). In the ongoing debate, some were discomforted by being reminded of things that had been forgotten. A conservative commentator concluded that, 'Most Australians… would support reconciliation if only Aboriginals and their supporters would agree to 'stop talking about the past' (Macintyre and Clark 2003, p. 157). For Aboriginal leader, Patrick Dodson, though, such reconciliation would only occur when Australia can 'own the truth of its past, and therefore free itself from the chains of the past' (ibid., p. 155).

The oppositions that erupted around the bicentenary are evident to varying degrees in the history of Australian commemorations of its foundation. Such commemorations began in a quietly triumphal way, untroubled by stories of Aboriginal loss. Those who had prospered in the new colony, especially former convicts and their descendants, celebrated their success by commemorating the colony's foundation on 26 January, calling it 'First Landing Day' or 'Foundation Day'. The original possessors of the country, the Aborigines, were largely, if not entirely, physically and conceptually absent. On the 50th anniversary of the First Settlement, in 1838, commentators only introduced Aborigines into the discussion as representing the base level from which the prosperous colony of New South Wales had risen. Kwan reports:

> Both the Gazette and the Australian, in reflecting the attitudes of the time, drew a sharp contrast between the 'untutored savage' and 'industrious and civilised man'. In fifty years, the 'miserable gunya [shelter] of the wandering Aborigine' had given way to 'the extensive and flourishing town' … his 'tiny bark canoe' to 'a goodly fleet of Colonial traders beside numerous visitants from the various quarters of the world'. (2007, p. 4)

Aborigines were still excluded as New South Wales prepared for the centenary of First Settlement, but there is evidence of active exclusion rather than racist ignorance. When Sir Henry Parkes, the then Premier, was asked whether the Aborigines would be included, he responded, 'And remind them that we have robbed them?' (Kwan 2007). By the sesqui-centenary, in 1938, Aborigines were starting to make themselves heard. On Australia Day of that year, Aborigines gathered in Sydney for a 'Day of Mourning and Protest' (Kwan 2007, p. 10). A poster advertising the event described the day as 'the 150th Anniversary of the Whitemen's seizure of our country' (Kwan 2007, p. 10). Out of sight of

most Australians, often dependent on white charity and without the universal right to vote until 1967, Aborigines found it difficult to have their case heard, at first. On the eve of 1972s Australia Day, though, a tent embassy had been set up outside Parliament House in the national capital following government rejection of Aboriginal land rights. Aborigines were now insistently visible at the heart of national life. That visibility expanded greatly in 1988, the Bicentennial year. Slogans included, 'White Australia has a black history – don't celebrate 1988' and 'Australia Day = Invasion Day'. Some Tasmanian Aborigines and their supporters had a more trenchant approach: 'Yes, let's celebrate: Invasion, Murder, Rape, Theft'. Now, Australia Day is also Invasion Day and there is a growing movement not to celebrate Australia's national day on 26 January and, instead, to find a date that is not associated with race divisions and dispossession. According to Calla Wahlquist in *The Guardian Online*, Melbourne's 2018 'Invasion Day' rally attracted 'up to 60,000 people'.

The erasure, forgetting and remembering evident in Australian history, are crucial concerns in Australian playwright Andrew Bovell's *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* as well as of the 'History Wars' in which it took part. The play is a commemoration of loss and a corrective exorcism for its audience, a performance in which the dark attitudes and events are conjured so that they can be observed, considered and either put to rest or given life to shape the future. In the programme for its premiere in 2001, Bovell notes, 'Our past hangs over us like a shadow. *Holy Day* takes us into that shadow but it does so only to invite a consideration of its legacy' (2001, p. iii).

The play begins in a threatening gloom: '*Black clouds loom over a vast desert plain. Lightning cuts the sky on the horizon. Thunder rumbles in the distance*' (1). Standing on a promontory, a bleeding woman intones a savage prayer in which she implores, 'Do my justice Lord and fight my fight against a faithless people' (1). She looks forward to 'the Holy Day' when she will 'go to the altar of God' to 'eat His body and drink of His blood, the blood of my gladness and joy' (1). A single gunshot interrupts the cannibalistic reverie. We later learn that it is her husband killing himself.

From this gothic beginning, the play summons to life an array of Australian spectres and demons, the unheard, the people overlooked in histories, the figures that have slipped from memory and the ones people have tried to forget. Unwelcome visitors and the disclosure of dark

secrets drive the narrative onwards. Whether lies will survive inspection and crimes be uncovered provides the tension. Kidnapping, displacement, enslavement, rape, murder and massacre are the topics of secrets, silences and forgettings in Australia's history that are spoken, foregrounded and recalled in the play.

The two figures in the play's opening are interlopers, the man a missionary and the woman his wife. They may suggest to the audience a biblical and post-biblical narrative of deserts involving madmen and zealots going into the wilderness to face their external and internal demons and those who later went into the wilderness to convert the benighted savages to Christianity.

Wilderness and salvation are also suggested by the play's bracketed subtitle, 'The Red Sea' in its recalling the story in Exodus of Moses leading the tribes of Israel across a desert and through the Red Sea to win the Promised Land. There are obvious parallels with Australian history, especially the triumphalist version that emphasises the creation of a nation in difficult natural circumstances. Thus, the play evokes a triumphalist narrative and subverts it by replacing the ugliness it has elided or removed.

Most of *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* occurs at a remote, frontier inn occupied by the keeper, Nora, and the Aboriginal girl she has stolen and brought up as her own, Obedience. At some distance from the inn lives Wakefield, a landowner. Three itinerants arrive at the inn, Epstein, Goundry and a silent boy, Cornelius. We later learn that Goundry murdered the boy's parents when he was an assigned convict on their farm and took the boy as a companion/sex slave.

The following morning, a woman arrives, '*drenched*' and '*cut*'. She is Elizabeth, the missionary's wife who opened the play. She claims that her baby daughter has been 'taken'. Suspicion falls on a wandering Aboriginal woman and this eventually leads to the massacre of Aborigines that forms the climax of the play.

The ennobling effect of frontier life, fostering courage and fortitude, has been a foundational motif in triumphalist post-colonial narratives. In this play, however, rather than an ennobling 'sunlit plain', this is a frontier darkened by cruelty, half-truths and lies. Uncertainty is everywhere and no one is trustworthy. How Obedience came to be with Nora and Cornelius with Goundry, how the missionary came to suicide and what really happened to the missionary's daughter are continuing uncertainties in the play, fuelling a general anxiety.

Racial conflict adds significantly to the tension in this frontier dystopia and the play's depiction of it puts the lie to the triumphalist forgetting of Aboriginal resistance to white invasion. Epstein and Goundry report hearing that there has 'been trouble with the blacks up here' (5) and seeing 'nothing but empty shacks for thirty miles back' (5) recalling for at least some of the audience the terrified flight of settlers in the face of Aboriginal resistance. Goundry adds to the narrative when he mentions 'Two white men speared in the back not twenty miles from here. And a farmer and his wife burned to death in their shack. They say they had the woman before they killed her' (6). Aborigines are even more menacing for being invisible. The audience may have a direct experience of the menace when, at the end of a scene, Goundry vividly describes the terror of his experience as a shepherd: 'We never saw a single black man, but sure enough if we counted twenty sheep that night there would be nineteen the next morning. Every shadow seemed to us to be a man with his spear raised. And every sound in the bush a secret call' (19). When a party is being raised against the Aborigines, the ostensible reason is revenge for stealing a child, but no one believes it. The real reason is a central one for the removal of Australian Aborigines from much of their land, white agriculture. Wakefield plausibly observes that organising a party against the Aborigines will not be difficult because sheep are being taken. Epstein is equally convincing and Wakefield's response corroborates the point. The people bearing the cost in the play and in the nation more broadly are the Aborigines. In this regard, the play works as a reminder of something forgotten or overlooked.

The overriding darkness of the play symbolises the secrets and silences that are crucial to it and its case against the 'Three Cheers' version of Australian history. The ending of the play suggests the unheard testimonies of witnesses and victims. After Obedience sees the massacre, Goundry rapes her and cuts out her tongue, an image powerfully evoking the silenced victims of colonialism. He deposits her injured body on the ground outside the inn, telling Nora that the Aborigines are responsible, a lie that Obedience cannot correct. At the very end of the play, '*OBEDIENCE remains facing the audience, her mouth bleeding, her stare vacant*' (66). The cruellest silences in the play belong to the stolen and damaged children in it, Obedience and Cornelius. Having lost family, autonomy, cultural connection and liberty, they are robbed of the capacity to report the crimes against them.

Other silences abound. Goundry and Epstein's reluctant mateship is partially sustained by a collusive silence about Goundry's treatment of Cornelius. Before the massacre, Wakefield tells Epstein, '[T]urn your eyes away from the river, for once it's done not a word of it will be spoken. It will be as though it never happened' (62), saying which Wakefield goes inside to find his journal and rip pages from it, hoping to ensure another silence. Finally, Elizabeth, the missionary's widow, offers herself to Wakefield and, to seal the deal, she also offers to tell the truth about her missing child and her husband's death. Clearly believing that she has killed her baby, Wakefield tells her, 'then I can only turn you away. But if you stay quiet then yes, I can take you…. But this is our agreement, Mrs. Wilkes. You and I will be silent about what has passed. For what is not spoken will eventually fade' (63).

Holy Day (The Red Sea) demonstrates the reverse of Wakefield's assertion, for what tends not to be spoken finds utterance in this play. The audience learns the truth about Nora's possession of Obedience and Goundry's of Cornelius as well as the events that led to the missionary's suicide. The play itself also contradicts Wakefield in that it speaks the secrets, the lies, the silences and the forgotten parts of Australian history. Just as Goundry will eventually show symptoms of the venereal disease he has contracted from Nora, and Elizabeth's leaking breasts bear testimony to her having recently given birth, so the truth will emerge, spectres from the shadows created by lies and silences. *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* insists that we must throw light into the shadows of our past to discover the truth of what is there, commemorate it and fix it.

The stolen Aboriginal character, Obedience, has the most complex relationship to silence and lies. Although she is able to speak for most of the play, she cannot articulate a nagging sense of loss and displacement. Since having been removed from her mother when very young, she has been fed lies and half-truths which she has no option but to believe. Still, she has a niggling memory of the sea and 'an old woman's face, black as night' (23). When she questions Nora about the sea, Nora tells her a lie, that it is red. The script suggests that Nora is maintaining her relationship with Obedience by keeping her ignorant. The relationship suggests a broader dynamic: '… the mental enslavement of the subjects of a totalitarian begins when their memories are taken away. When a large power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness it uses the method of organised forgetting' (Connerton 1989, p. 14).

The same is true of a dominant culture and a subordinate one within the same nation.

The tussle between remembering and forgetting is ongoing. As recently as 2014, in an article subtitled, 'a stronger future or perpetuating past paternalism?', Shelley Bielefeld repeated an oft-made observation, 'The history wars play a significant role in Australia's discourse of colonialism and have a continuing impact upon Indigenous Australians' (p. 15). More recently still, in August 2017, an incident during a performance in a Sydney primary school suggests the pervasiveness of the anxiety about Australia's past and its continuing power. The school children were presenting a play concerning Australian history in which there was a section dealing with the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal children kidnapped by white authorities and the apology to the Aboriginal people in 2008 by then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. During it, some children held up a sign that read, 'Sorry'. One of the parents watching the performance was a television football commentator who described the segment as 'bloody disgraceful' (Marshallsea 2017). Amid the storm that broke, parents took morning tea to teachers as a sign of support. According to Marshallsea's BBC report, 'The play came in a tense week for race relations in Australia, with a local council in Melbourne drawing flak from Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, among others, for announcing it would abandon its traditional Australia Day celebrations on 26 January' (ibid.).

This chapter has situated *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* in a post-colonial context involving loss, erasure and forgetting concerning dispossession, identity and cultural discontinuity. Having foreshadowed the trend theoretically, the history of Australia's commemoration of European settlement provided here depicted a shift from triumphalist events from which the dispossessed were entirely absent through a much more ambiguous approach to the moral, cultural, social and economic issues evoked by commemorating the settlement/dispossession to the indelible contemporary presence of Aboriginal issues in the ongoing tussle about Australia Day/Invasion Day. Starting as a celebration of possession, the commemoration of the First Settlement is now an event in which there is a much greater consciousness of loss. The tensions and anxieties listed above have fuelled the History Wars and were given dramatic expression in Bovell's play. The play reinforces what this brief cultural history suggests, that reconciliation cannot occur without acknowledging injury and

loss and, further, that whether or not we can or want to remember it, the truth will out and, along with it, justice. An incident from 25 years ago provides a case in point. In 1922, the descendants of the people on what Captain Cook called 'Possession Island' were removed from it, but returned in 1946. They formed a village council headquartered on a neighbouring island in 1969 and, in 1993, they were granted native title over the seven islands in the group, 223 years after Cook's visit.

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CHAPTER 7

After Them, The Flood: Remembering, Performance and the Writing of History

Conan Lawrence and Dan Ellin

Memorials all over Europe became sites of ritual performances of mourning and remembering by families and local communities during the twentieth century, particularly on important anniversaries (Winter). By examining performances commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Dam Busters raid commissioned by the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 2013 and the history of Bomber Command commissioned by the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) in 2015, 2017 and 2018, this chapter examines how dramatic performance can shape participants' experiences of official commemoration events and, in certain circumstances, either reinforce or cast doubt over the audience's culturally entrained assumptions of the events they mark.

The authors (Ellin a Historian, Lawrence a Writer and Director, whose text appears in italics) have differentiated their voices to highlight the links, joins and hinges between the disciplines they practice, but also to illuminate

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how historically-informed performance and performance-aware research can combine to explore the roles and responsibilities required for an archive-driven approach to commemorating loss.

The themes common to both, and the different forms in which their practices are expressed, converge to give an account of the staging of endeavour, loss and impact particular to twentieth century aerial warfare, in which many of its combatants (and non-combatants) have no known graves, as a result of which their memorialised lives (whether through the writing of history or placing of performance) are spoken for. The chapter also describes an implicit internal drive in both practices to respect authenticity (an authenticity which might serve as an ethical proxy for the dead and commemorated), how this is generated by an engagement with an archive, and how the practices of Historian and Writer-Director might share similar interests in keeping the names of the dead 'alive' through their work, through a process of "historical recovery" (Little 45).

Approximately one million people were killed in the bombing of Europe during the Second World War, more than five million people were made homeless, and from a strength of 125,000, over 55,000 RAF Bomber Command aircrew were killed on operations. The historicised memory of Bomber Command is largely based on narratives constructed during the war and reinforced in the intervening decades (Falconer), but when considering the commemoration of Bomber Command, it is important to consider what has been forgotten and why. During the war, British propaganda deliberately sought to construct the perception of national identity and unity, and the British were depicted as stoic underdogs, fighting a 'good war' against Nazi aggression and their tactics of 'Blitzkrieg', indiscriminate bombing and terror (Rose 1). By the end of the war, Bomber Command had become an efficient and ruthless machine capable of both precision and devastating area attacks (Connelly 160), and the RAF's bombing campaign killed hundreds of thousands of people in Europe (Connelly 2). As a consequence, the hegemonic narrative of the Second World War frequently downplays the role of Bomber Command. The 'Battle of Britain' fits firmly into the narrative of the 'good war' and arguably marks the beginning of the dominance of Fighter Command and the Spitfire in public memory. 'The few' of Fighter Command became famous, while the less comfortable role Bomber Command played during the war is often ignored.

However, as a daring precision attack, one of the most recognisable narratives of Bomber Command in popular culture resides in Michael

Anderson's film *The Dam Busters* (1955). Based on the book by Paul Brickhill (1952) and Guy Gibson's *Enemy Coast Ahead* (1946), *The Dam Busters* has played an important role in the cultural construction of the public memory of Bomber Command. Both the film (and its theme by Eric Coates) have become powerful and easily recognised cultural themes. The tune of the Dam Busters' March is sung at football matches, and the idea of the bouncing bomb has been used in political cartoons and TV advertisements (Taylor 8, 69, 100). To a certain extent, the popular memory of Bomber Command is still based on performances filmed in the 1950s.

My childhood was saturated with post-war films celebrating combat, endeavour and (almost always British) sang-froid. The Dam Busters *was one of these films, which, along with* 633 Squadron (1964) *and* The Battle of Britain (1969), *engaged with a relatively young veteran audience as well as assisting in the formation of Cold War attitudes to the 'enemy'. Often, my weekly comics included* Warlord (1974–1986) *and* Battle (1975–1988), *both now (but not at the time) glaringly conspicuous by their absence of Bomber Command stories, perhaps reflecting an ongoing unease about the difficult placing of area bombing in general and Dresden in particular within their narratives about the 'good war'.*

In performance terms, 617 Squadron's 1943 Dams Raid might initially resemble one of Matthew Goulish's 'impossible tasks',[1] *and the war films mentioned above a reflection of how RAF planning relies on its 'players' improvising its execution in practice, finding practical solutions to methodological and tactical questions, as well as a perceived artisanal approach to war, as opposed to area bombing's 'production-line' methodology.*

In Archive Fever *Derrida mentions the 'unknowable weight'* (Derrida 29) *of the concept of the archive, imperial or metric: the weight of an object. But allowing the homophone to double as an unknowable wait, an indeterminate pause, or gap, between events might also be useful here. It is this unknowable weight of what it means to use an archive, full of gaps where there is room for more weight to be, that is challenging, because its hanging questions are: "How much does a name, a fact, weigh?", and, "How long are you ready to wait before you get to know how to use it?".*

[1] The 'impossible task', as elucidated by Goulish, is one set as a mode for generating new performance material in rehearsal, which cannot reasonably be expected to be completed by a performer, but which might reveal, in the attempt, a new direction or moment in the performance being devised or rehearsed.

In April 1996 I was a participant in Mike Pearson's three-day Site Specific Performance workshop at Dartington College of Arts' Performance Research *launch symposium, a significant training event for my future site-based, performance trajectory. On the second day we travelled to the coast near Slapton. After reading the red 'Danger – Keep Out – Collapse' sign we carefully walked along the crumbling footpath it guarded: a thin, fraying bar between the beach below and the land it was part of, performing this memory of it, a warning that links are always degrading, and that networks always need reforming, re-treading.*

The Dam Busters

Led by Wing Commander Guy Gibson, 19 Lancaster bombers took off from RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire on 16 May 1943 to attack three dams in Germany's Ruhr valley using 'bouncing bombs' designed by Barnes Wallis. The Eder and the Möhne dams were successfully breached and in the resulting *flutblitz* (flash flood), 300 million gallons of water flooded the valleys below, disrupting industry and killing 1600 civilians and slave labourers. Eight aircraft failed to return, and 53 aircrew were killed. Gibson was awarded the Victoria Cross for his role. Operation Chastise, the Dams Raid, was commemorated at RAF Scampton on 16 May 2013 to mark the 70th anniversary of the event.

In November 2012 I was invited to discuss an opportunity to develop a performance to form part of the official commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Dams Raid in partnership with BBC Radio Lincolnshire, with its local networks and knowledge of Bomber County (as Lincolnshire is often referred to) and the Royal Air Force. The performance was commissioned to take place at RAF Scampton on 16 May 2013, and to be recorded for the radio as part of a 24-hour broadcast package tracing the minute-by-minute events of 70 years earlier. Involvement of the University of Lincoln was important for both partners and meant that its actors would be playing historical characters of the same age. Planning for the performance happened in close collaboration with Wing Commander (then Squadron Leader) Howard Leader of 7644 Squadron, the RAF's Public Relations Reserve unit, and Michael Hortin, BBC Radio Lincolnshire's Producer.

Anita Hagerman writes that, "When narratives are harnessed to do the work of staging national identities, the artists working with those narratives are at once indebted to history while creating a new version of that history

for present day consumption" (Hagerman 106). *This indebtedness to history manifested itself in the agreement of shared key drivers for the performance between the three partners, which were to aspire to (i) authenticity of costume (ii) authenticity of dialogue (iii) authenticity of physicality. The 'new version of that history' will be returned to later, in the 'Talking Heads' section of this chapter.*

Satisfying the desire for authenticity of costume (via *BBC Radio Lincolnshire funding) meant sourcing BAFTA-winning Angels Costumes stock for the seven Bomber Command aircrew and four Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) characters. Angels' Military section is renowned for its attention to detail, researching combinations of equipment and costume for precise historical periods and ensuring that emblems of rank and role are correctly allocated to each costume.*

Authenticity of dialogue meant consulting a range of sources, but particularly Max Arthur's Dambusters (2009), *a chronological, oral historical recreation of 617 Squadron's formation, planning, execution and evaluation of the Dams Raid. Following the audition process, undergraduate actors from the University of Lincoln's B.A. (Hons) Drama programme were given a reading/viewing list to consult to deepen their knowledge of 617 Squadron and Bomber Command in the wider context of the Second World War. Oral archive material from BBC Radio Lincolnshire was also made available to the cast.*

The performance on 16 May 2013 was to be given to an audience of serving RAF personnel, dignitaries, representatives of international air forces, and two of the three surviving veterans of 617 Squadron in the Lancaster Hangar at RAF Scampton where aircrews were briefed exactly 70 years before. The composition of the audience meant that this was a performance to celebrate achievement, endeavour, exactitude and bravery, not to problematise the nature of wartime bomber offensives and operations.

In order to ensure the two-hour commemorative event's schedule went exactly to time (of vital importance since a ceremonial overflight of two GR4 Tornados, The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's (BBMF) Spitfires and Hurricanes, as well as the UK's only flying Lancaster formed part of the proceedings), the performance was given a slot of exactly 30 minutes, and the importance of adhering to this slot was reiterated at every planning meeting with the RAF. The Dam Busters performance mirrored an operation, through company formation, planning, briefing, acclimatisation, delivery and evaluation (or, in RAF terms, 'debriefing', which this chapter and its dialogue tasked with 'retracing' events might resemble).

The Lancaster crew I decided to base the drama around was a composite one: Gibson was necessary to narrate 617 Squadron's formation, but the other characters were chosen according to the dramatic potential of their recorded interviews, and in particular for the precision of technical detail, emotional affect and rhythm. The four WAAF characters were chosen to reflect the importance of their wartime roles in the many support structures of the wartime RAF, to vocalise the range of emotions of those left behind, as well as to highlight the casual, everyday sexism that would invoke disciplinary proceedings in a contemporary services context, and therefore also illustrate the development of social and cultural attitudes towards female military personnel to a contemporary audience.

One of the many advantages of working with Wing Commander Leader of 7644 Squadron was his ability to unlock RAF resources to assist with the performance process, in particular by facilitating an immersive experience of service life for the actors. According with Suzanne Little's description of theatre's relationship with 'the Real' as being grounded in 'a desire to recover and reprocess through repetition' (2015, p. 44), *we deemed this immersion in the routines of service life essential to realistically present militarily trained bodies to an audience who would be expected to pay close scrutiny to the physical movement, rhythms and reactions of actors in performance (and they later testified to feeling as though they were 'on parade' throughout the performance).*

Central to achieving this third strand of authenticity (that of physicality, demeanour, bearing), therefore, was spending two days at RAF College Cranwell (the service's equivalent of Sandhurst, where RAF initial training takes place, and where all aircrew are selected and trained prior to deployment). The cast took part in a team-building exercise on an assault course, learnt evasion and foraging techniques from RAF Regiment troops, fresh from a posting in Afghanistan, and received intensive drill training (which is an exercise in enforced repetition of exact movements, rigorously scrutinised and corrected) from RAF Drill Sergeant Noyaukas, followed by a 6 am room inspection. The actors playing flying officers were spared this experience (as well as the honour of being marched up to College Hall), as they had spent the previous evening researching the Dams Raid and delivered a full operational briefing on it to senior officers and serving air crew (as well as the rest of the cast and director) after breakfast. This proved invaluable for the actor playing Gibson in the mission briefing scene of the performance, allowing him to deliver accurate pronunciation, phrasing

and pacing of briefing terminology, and aiding the process of the "historical recovery" (Little 45) *of authenticity throughout the performance.*

Having been inculcated in service life, rehearsals began, with regular drill refresher sessions at the University of Lincoln's Brayford campus led by an actor playing a Flight Sergeant. Further visits to sites significant to 617 Squadron, including Scampton (where Wing Commander Gibson's office is preserved) allowed the cast to become comfortable with RAF routines and spaces. This proved to be particularly fruitful when the dress rehearsal at Scampton revealed that the cast would need to march the full length of the Hangar, down a narrow aisle through the audience to their playing area, directly facing two of the three surviving veterans of the Dams Raid, a Defence Minister and Air Vice Marshal Atha, the leading member present of RAF Air Staff. Wearing radio microphones (the acoustic of an aircraft hangar large enough to shelter several Lancaster heavy bombers is particularly unforgiving), the cast's props were a blackboard (for the briefing that took place there 70 years before), seven chairs and flying gear for the raid sequence. A raised rear projection screen bore intertitles for scenes, a slide detailing each Lancaster lost on the Dams Raid and the names of its crew, archive video footage of training sorties with the 'Upkeep' bouncing bomb (sourced from aviation firm Vickers, who Barnes Wallis, 'Upkeep's inventor, was employed by) and footage filmed by the BBC with actors boarding the Panton brothers' non-flying Lancaster at East Kirkby.

The performance ended with the actors recreating the Green Park Bomber Command Memorial frieze (seven aircrew in bronze by Liam O'Connor), an instance of what Peter Brook calls a 'climax of silence' (Brook 52), *a ritualised stillness, embodiment of still(ed) lives that set out from the very same space seven decades earlier. The Hangar-based performance, despite its staging in military space, did not resemble Mike Pearson's* The Persians *at Sennybridge,*[2] *but did throw into sharp relief the ideas of host and ghost in a space where its historical referent took place (or whose hosting was begun) 70 years before. This was not transgressive, or unsettling, but a revival of a version of Ingold's 'taskscape'* (Ingold 219), *a fictive doubling of narratives, and an 'occupying'* (Pearson 34) *of site to celebrate an event, its 'architecture […] as subject matter, framing, subtext'* (Pearson 35), *'providing for, and attending to, audiences and performers alike'* (Pearson 70).

[2]The British Army's *Fighting in Built Up Areas* training facility in the Brecon Beacons, at all other times off-limits to civilians, but which hosted public performances of Pearson's adaptation of Aeschylus's historical tragedy in 2010.

The performance was followed by a nationally televised sunset ceremony outside the hangar-stage, which the cast viewed with the audience, with the Queen's Squadron and RAF Regimental Band providing ceremonial drill and music prior to Air Vice Marshal Atha's dedication to the crews of 617 Squadron, reinforcing its centrality in the operational heritage of the RAF.

The 30-minute Radio adaptation of After Me The Flood, *recorded at BBC Radio Lincolnshire, formed part of the Silver Award-winning submission in the History category of New York Festival Radio, 2014, and is permalinked on BBC iPlayer.*

In 2014, I was joined by Andrew Westerside to work on Leaving Home, *a major site-based performance in Friesthorpe, in collaboration with the Royal Anglian Regiment to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War One.*

Nicolas Bourriaud provides the figure of the 'Semionaut' (Bourriaud 18) *as a key to this trope of leaving home our work with archives investigates, who 'produce original pathways through signs'* (Bourriaud 18). *The gaps in IBCC's archive, like other archives we work with, can be confronted, rescued, bridged. Rather than turn away from the unknowable weight of these missing bodies and voices at which the archive hints, I am interested in a dialogue with it, a search for the form that includes a dialectic of production whose equation might be notated: found fact + interpretation in chosen space = x. I'm still working on the x.*

Bourriaud again: "The 'semionaut' imagines the links, the likely relations between disparate sites […] producing new cartographies of knowledge' (Bourriaud 18). *I will move on to one of these cartographies later—at the IBCC—but it is the necessity of this semionautical map-making combined with radical uncertainty over the weight of the map's underlying territorial signs that define one half of my relationship with these archive-based performances.*

Remembering Bomber Command

The Dams Raid has become a synecdoche for Bomber Command partly because the *Dam Busters* film conforms to the dominant narrative of a good war. In the film, the dams appear as inanimate concrete walls; they are seen as legitimate targets attacked by a small elite force at great risk to themselves. The bouncing bombs Barnes Wallis designed indirectly killed people in the resultant floods after the dams were breached, but

the film does not show this (Ramsden 90); instead it focuses on the loss of aircraft and aircrew.

When the bombing war is remembered, it is often in the context of either the Dam Busters or the firestorm of Dresden. The bombing of Dresden in February 1945 is central to the debate about the ethics and morality of the destructive power of aerial warfare and the history of Bomber Command. Depending on the politics of interested parties and which sources they choose to believe, between 25,000 and 250,000 people were killed in the city (Overy 395). During the war, the Allied bombers were known as *terrorflieger* (terror fliers) by the German population. Unable to reconcile the destruction of cities with the good war narrative, by 1945 the UK government began to distance themselves from the bombing campaign. Bomber Command was not mentioned in Churchill's victory speech, their commanding officer, Arthur Harris, was not included in the 1946 New Year's Honour's list, and Bomber Command aircrew did not receive a separate campaign medal (Gray 1353). In the 1990s, the protests and controversy following the broadcasts of a TV documentary about the Canadian contribution to the bombing campaign showed all too clearly that both Harris and Bomber Command were still capable of polarising opinion (Beruson and Wise). More recently, A. C. Grayling asked whether the Allied bombing of civilians was a crime (2006), and, in 2015, on the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Dresden, Archbishop Justin Welby's speech at the Frauenkirche was both lauded and criticised. The history of Bomber Command and the bombing war is a prime example, therefore, of difficult or dissonant heritage.

Difficult Heritage

Difficult heritage concerns histories that are not always positive celebrations of the past (McCarthy 52), or when the interpretation of past events is contested, unsettling or awkward (MacDonald 1). The days of a single authoritative historical voice are over; inevitably the experiences and narratives of different parties differ widely (McCarthy 53), and there is an unavoidable relationship between heritage and contemporary politics (Tunbridge and Ashworth 46). In Italy, the Allies are seen as both liberators and murderers (Bardoli and Fincardi 1036), but even in countries where the war might be considered less morally

complex, remembering the bombing can still create a barrage of conflicting opinions, positions and agendas. In 2006, an interpretative panel at the Canadian War Museum discussing the 'enduring controversy' of the bombing itself became the focus of a 'public battle' over whether veterans were being depicted as war criminals (Bothwell Hansen and Macmillan). Understandably, RAF veterans and their families would rather see bomber aircrew depicted as national heroes.

Bomber aircrews statistically suffered the greatest casualty rates among the Allied forces during the Second World War (Wells 115). Surviving Bomber Command veterans themselves perceive that their contribution to the war has been neglected, and that the last 70 years has been a struggle for recognition. This culminated in the dedication of the Bomber Command memorial in Green Park in 2012, the awarding of the Bomber Command Clasp to veterans in 2013, and the opening of the IBCC in Lincoln in 2018. However, many surviving veterans consider this to be too little too late. In the decades since the end of the war, veterans believed they had been 'unfairly excluded from dominant national recollections of the Second World War' (Houghton 170). Most Bomber Command veterans are keen to point out that the history of Bomber Command is much more than the story of the Dam Busters and 617 Squadron. Indeed, those that served in other squadrons want to talk about their experiences and about the merits of aircraft other than the Lancaster. Like the men who flew them, Whitley, Hamden, Wellington, Stirling and Halifax bombers are also often neglected in public memory. Although the RAF's cultural trait of understatement persists (Francis 158, Bishop 94), veterans also often depict their colleagues as heroic victims, and in their testimonies, aircrew frequently highlight unproblematic events that resonate with the narrative of a good war. In interviews recorded for the IBCC Digital Archive, veterans are keen to tell stories that show their positive contribution to the war. These include descriptions of Operation Manna to supply food to those starving in the Low Countries in April and May 1945, and their role in returning prisoners of war to the UK. The inclusion of 'Cooks Tours', the practice of low flying over German cities to see the damage after hostilities ceased is also a common trope, as it enables aircrew to express their surprise at how devastated they were. Bombing at night from thousands of feet, they had little way of knowing what effect their bombs were having.

The IBCC Interpretation Plan

Live performances to mark the unveiling and opening of the new memorial and filmed performances to be used in its exhibition were commissioned by the IBCC. With £3.1 m Heritage Lottery funding and partnered by the University of Lincoln, the centre opened in 2018 and serves as a focus for recognition, remembrance and reconciliation for RAF Bomber Command and all those involved in the bombing war. The IBCC consists of a memorial to those who died, a digital archive of material relating to the bombing war and an exhibition to tell their stories. In order to navigate the complex issues experienced by the Canadian War Museum, and hopefully avoid similar problems, the content and tone of the IBCC exhibition follows the interpretation plan drafted in May 2015. The plan sets out how the IBCC approaches the difficult heritage of the history of Bomber Command. The IBCC aims to tell the stories of all those who served in, supported the efforts of, and/or suffered as a result of the activities of Bomber Command. Rather than being 'myth busting' revisionist history, which tends to strengthen the polarisation of opinions, the interpretation centre makes use of multiple voices to engage with the disparity between a dominant narrative of the war and 'sectional narratives' (Ashplant et al. 2004). The IBCC does not focus on 'the great men of history', leaders such as Churchill or heroic figures like Gibson; but tells everyday stories to an audience largely consisting of families and school children with little knowledge of the bombing war. Informed by the interpretation plan, the live and filmed performances are some of the ways that the IBCC attempts to promote remembrance, recognition and reconciliation.

Performance: IBCC Unveiling 2015 and Opening 2018

Returning to Bomber Command after two years allowed Andrew Westerside and I to work with Dan Ellin and the IBCC Digital Archive. Commissioned to deliver ten-minute performances at the unveiling of the IBCC Memorial in October 2015, and the visitor centre's official opening in 2018, performances were delivered to audiences of 3000 including over 300 Bomber Command veterans and senior RAF personnel. The scripts (both entitled, 'In Their Name') were based on written material and documents in the IBCC Digital Archive to provide individuals' emotional

contexts alongside a compressed 'operation sequence' ending in the death of the three aircrew, and a non-verbatim passage to the fallen and their inscribed names commemorated on the memorial wall arcing round the spire behind the actors.

Pausing for a moment the task of weighing individual names to recall Derrida's initial definition of the archive's heritage as '[a] house, a domicile or address' (Derrida 2)*, and Schneider's conception of it as 'the architecture of a social memory which demands visible or materially traceable remains'* (Schneider 102) *I found another inkling of my struggle with it. The archive as a lost and perfect home of possibility, full of results that do not speak for themselves, results that need tending, raising, hearing. But hearing, moreover, in company. Results that require assistance to perform. Assistance in crossing significant thresholds and gaps: from monitor screen to stage, object to body, digital space to physical place—from lost time to momentary plenitude: an assistance, perhaps, that embodies and invokes a 'social power over memory'* (Schneider 102)*. If the archive is, then, a home for unknowable weight, and an unknowable number of signs, but a home that must be left, what must we do there to get away?*

The playing area was open-air, framed by the memorial spire the event celebrated the unveiling of, and relayed on very large video screens to enable the large audience to gain the best experience of the non-raked 'stage'.

Costumes were provided by Khaki Devils from privately owned stock (Angels' flying costumes all being hired at the time of the performance), and actors again wore radio microphones reflecting the open-air acoustic of the site. The performance also included Noel Coward's Lie in the dark and listen*, as well as excerpts from the letters of Ian Wynn and the diary of Hedley Madgett. Wynn often wrote home to his wife and son, and the increasing strain of bombing operations can clearly be seen in the pages of Madgett's diary* (IBCC)*. Flight Engineer Ian Wynn was killed 25 May 1943 on an operation to Dusseldorf, aged 35. He belonged to 100 Squadron (Lancasters), based at RAF Grimsby. Pilot Hedley Madgett was killed 18 August 1943 on an operation to the Peenemunde V2 rocket site aged 21. He flew with 61 Squadron (Lancasters) based at RAF Syerston. The Lancaster engine start-up sequence was also taken from the IBCC archive. The performance was bookended by overflights by a Dakota from the BBMF and one of the last appearances by the sole Vulcan bomber (a stalwart of the RAF's Cold War air fleet).*

The 2015 performance for audiences of RAF veterans, their family members and serving personnel did little to challenge perceptions

of the history of the bombing war, but largely conformed to the well-established heroic narrative. However, the performance in 2018 juxtaposed this narrative with that of a German woman, de-housed in an attack on Berlin. Informed by the IBCC's interpretation plan, this performance engaged with the dissonant heritage of the bombing war. The German character was taken from the filmed performances recorded for the IBBC's exhibition, and by challenging audience member's expectations, it was intended to highlight shared experiences and promote the IBCC's objectives of remembrance, recognition and reconciliation.

IBCC Filmed 'Talking Heads' Performances 2017

The other half of that relationship with the archive mentioned earlier lies in the return of information, evidence of map-making, to the archive, embodied here in the IBCC's visitor centre, and a reminder of Schneider's conception of performance's place in its 'architecture of a social memory' (2001, p. 102). *Unlocking an archive and carrying back information over its threshold in another form, I am aware of the weight of this return, the gift it might resemble, but relaxed about how future cartographers might choose to navigate its contents, constructing the 'new version' of history Hagerman demands of performance concerning national identities* (Hagerman 106). *Perhaps this compensating lack of concern on adding to the archive (hence becoming a future semionaut's sign) finds expression in Bourriaud's definition of the work as '[n]o longer an end point but a simple moment in an infinite chain of contributors'* (Bourriaud 19). *Comfort, also, in now belonging to a domiciled genealogy of (mostly dead) strangers, and satisfaction in providing evidence of how one of these 'simple moments' was constructed, for future archive users.*

Four screens show 16 filmed performances in two of the IBCC's exhibition spaces. Each film is between two and three minutes long and informs visitors about an aspect of the bombing war. Filmed in 4K HD against a black background, each solo actor appears from the darkness, and the intention is that visitors feel as though they are listening to, and making eye contact with, someone standing in front of them. It was originally planned to include surtitles to the screens, but it was felt that this would detract from the realism of the visitor experience. Instead, visitors can read the text of each performance on one of the centre's handheld devices if needed. These devices have the added advantage of enabling foreign language translations to be selected. The performances

were filmed using a camera turned through 90 degrees, enabling the actors to be shown life size on screens two metres tall that appear almost as doorways in the exhibition centre. The audio is played through directional speakers placed above and behind the screens.

The scripts for the performances were again based on material from the IBCC. To try to present a balanced narrative throughout the centre, voices less frequently heard in the UK were also chosen from the IBCC's extensive archive of oral history interviews with veterans and survivors of the bombing. As well as the stories of the aircrew, performances telling the stories of male and female ground personnel, factory workers, members of the German defences and those who were bombed were used as a basis for the performances. These sometimes contradictory, multi-national everyday experiences of those caught up in the bombing war are part of the IBCC exhibition's 'orchestra of voices.' The act of memory is itself a performance, and now in their 90s, many interviewees are well rehearsed in retelling their stories (Allison). Sometimes, when a veteran has been interviewed several times, even by different interviewers and months apart, their interview will contain almost identical sections 70 years after the events being discussed. Yet it is impossible to expect explicit details or 'facts' from an interview, rather they are a record of feelings and impressions mediated by the intervening years. As the history of Bomber Command is difficult heritage, veterans and survivors often bring their own agenda to the oral history interviews.

Choosing suitable stories from the archive to be filmed for the exhibition was problematic, but dramatic and engaging stories were chosen that narrated shared experiences of dedication to duty in adversity, fear and humour from a wider spectrum of characters. Together, the stories chosen tell the tale of a typical bombing operation from its preparation though to its aftermath. The characters are two male RAF ground personnel and three female WAAFs, six RAF aircrew (one Polish and one Australian), two British civilian factory workers, a German civilian survivor of the bombing of Berlin, a German Auxiliary Fireman and a Luftwaffe night-fighter pilot. For many of the scripts, once a suitable section of an interview had been identified it was a simple matter of changing past tense into present tense. An amount of artistic licence was used however: in the case of the Polish navigator who describes a typical debriefing, a composite script was put together from sections of two interviews.

Performed in a range of accents and dialects informed by Ellin's deep grounding in the IBCC archives, the Talking Heads process was

particularly rewarding, allowing as it did, a dramatic reading of verbatim material from the everyday experiences of a range of combatants and non-combatants (and a realisation of how the air war could often blur these roles). Using, once again, B.A. (Hons) Drama students as actors (as well as three members of academic staff), the videoed monologues emphasised the importance of filmic performance: mostly still bodies, animated faces.

Costumes were sourced from Angels, and rehearsals took place over two weeks, with filming taking place in the University of Lincoln's Film Studios, staffed by students and Jack Shelbourn as Director of Photography. Multiple takes were required for each Talking Head, and the principal challenge was to ask actors to break the 'fourth wall'[3] and look directly into camera while performing their narrative, so as to maintain eye contact with those future visitors interacting with the installation at the Chadwick Centre. Ellin was present throughout filming, to ensure that historical continuity and accuracy was preserved, and the final decision of choosing which takes to include in the Talking Heads exhibits was taken by Dan and the IBCC team (led by Professor Heather Hughes).

To summarise, then: I fret about the weight of a name (which is either the greatest or smallest unit of an archive and, possibly, both), and simultaneously relish navigating the apparently empty space between the name and its appearance in performance. To invoke Derrida again, 'the feeling of getting lost while retracing one's footsteps' (Derrida 69), *while also recovering an impression of momentary certainty and permanence through commemorative performance, animates these archive-driven enquiries into the habitation of names, places and events, however brief, and however contingent.*

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[3]The 'fourth wall' is a term highlighting the conceptual separation of actors from their audience, for which actors are traditionally trained to avoid any acknowledgement of or engagement with.

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PART III

Commemoration and Place: Architecture, Landscape and the Ocean

CHAPTER 8

CHEERS GRANDAD! Third Angel's *Cape Wrath* and *The Lad Lit Project* as Acts of Remembrance

Alexander Kelly

Choose Your Parachute

Just before we start. Choose a coin. You've probably got one in your pocket, or your bag. Place it on a table or something nearby, for when you need it. I'll let you know when. But decide now: heads or tails?

Two Minutes' Silence

At 11 am on 11 November each year I go outside with colleagues, or stand on the platform of Leeds train station, or stand with a scattered handful of strangers in a car park in Dursley, I go outside and I observe the two minutes' silence. But I have to admit, I am silent for two minutes not only for the people who died in conflict, but also for

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the survivors, and the experiences that they carried with them afterwards. As well as remembering the dead, I remember the loss of the people who went into the conflict and came out changed, who came out carrying experiences that were unimaginable to them before they went in.

I remember my grandad, and what he carried with him, but rarely talked about. Experiences that happened to him when he was 19 that remain, thankfully, beyond the realm of my own experience.

I am not what you, or I, would call a patriot. But there is something in those two minutes of standing with strangers that I find… I cannot think of the word. A word. It is something to do with shared experience and feeling. Something to do with solidarity.

So let's get on.

On Memorials

In a 1994 edition of *The South Bank Show*, Melvyn Bragg asks Christian Boltanski about building monuments and memorials. Boltanski responds,

> The best solution to make a monument about the holocaust will be to make a monument very, very fragile, a monument that you have to rebuild every week. Because if you make a monument in bronze, after some time you forget completely why the monument was there but if you have to rebuild the monument every week, you must repeat the prayer every week and you must think about the monument.[1]

Of course Boltanski is talking about large scale, public memorials to commemorate historic, public events. But his point is a strong one, and one that applies to more personal commemoration, too. Remembering is not something that is done just once. It is something that continues, whether publicly or privately.

Several of Third Angel's shows have dealt explicitly with memory[2] but the two projects discussed here, *The Lad Lit Project* (2005) and *Cape Wrath* (2013), also explore live performance's capacity to be a memorial. To remember repeatedly.

[1] Boltanski in Fox (1994).

[2] Notably *Class of '76* (2000) and *Where From Here* (2000).

Fig. 8.1 Alexander Kelly in Third Angel's *The Lad Lit Project* (2005)

Family Stories

When he was 19, my grandad was a navigator in World War Two, in a two-man crewed Beaufighter bomber. Just him and the pilot. Their plane was shot down over occupied Holland.

This is how I tell his story in *The Lad Lit Project* (Fig. 8.1).

Caterpillar[3]

Alex moves one of the line of six chairs forward, sits side on to the audience.

> It is January 1945. You are 19 years old.
>
> You are the Flight Sergeant Observer on a two-man crew Beaufighter Bomber. That means that you are the Navigator. And the Wireless Operator, and the Air Gunner, and the Reconnaissance Photographer.

[3] From Kelly (2005).

You are only 19, but you can navigate this plane using the stars in the night time sky.

On this particular night your plane is in the sky somewhere over occupied Holland.

And on this particular night your plane is on fire. Neither you nor the pilot have done a parachute jump before, but you are going to have to bail out.

Stands.

You are first out of the plane and your parachute opens almost immediately. As you look down towards the ground you see that the packet of cigarettes that you did have stuffed into your boot has come loose and you watch as your cigarettes fall away from you into open space, and, just for a moment, you are pissed off about that.

Then the pilot falls past you, and you watch him, and you wait for his parachute to open.

And it never does.

Then you land in a field, and your training kicks in: your knees bend, you fall, you roll, you are back on your feet and you gather the parachute into your chest.

You run across the field, and dump the parachute in a ditch to hide it. You run out between two isolated cottages and onto a road, where you see a young boy just standing watching you. And you see a bike leaning against a hedge, and you think you're going to nick that bike, even though you have no idea where you are or where you are going to go. At that moment a man comes down the road on a bike, and he indicates, because he doesn't speak any English, he indicates that you should get on that bike and you should follow him. So you do.

He leads you to a farm house and the farmer opens the door, pulls you inside, pushes you down the hallway, opens a cupboard and pushes you inside, and he says one word to you in English and the word he says is: "Quiet." Then he closes the cupboard door, leaving you standing in darkness, listening to the sound of your heart beating, which seems to be beating much louder than a man who has just been pushed into a cupboard and told to be quiet would want his heart to be beating.

Just minutes later you hear a loud knock at the farmhouse door, and you hear the door open, and you hear Nazi soldiers come in and begin to search the farmhouse. Looking for you. You hear them in the hall outside

the cupboard. You hear them searching all the other rooms in the farmhouse. You hear them outside your cupboard again. And then you hear them leave. At some point after that, you have no idea how long, the farmer opens the cupboard door and lets you out.

You have been picked up by the Resistance. They give you a new identity. They take your dog tags from you, and they give you a forged identity card, with your photograph on it, but with the name Jan Van Der Ploeg. They give you a badge that says "Doofstom," which means deaf and dumb, because your cover is that Jan Van Der Ploeg is a deaf and dumb tailor from northern Holland, making his way cross country, by bicycle.

Sometimes you are accompanied and sometimes you are alone. Because you are pretending to be deaf you have to ignore it when anyone speaks to you from behind, even if they shout at you, even if they are on a road block, even if they are armed, you have to just keep cycling and hope they don't shoot.

In this way you move from one safe house to another. Some are farmhouses, others are in towns and cities. In each safe house the Resistance families who hide you, they feed you from the meagre rations they are given each week – usually just potatoes and a lump of fat. They make a pudding out of mashed up tulip bulbs, which is really sweet. They drink tea and coffee made from dried privet leaves. Although what the difference between privet leaf tea and privet leaf coffee is, you never fully understand.

You are standing in an alcove off a living room in a house in the west of Holland; you are standing next to a Resistance soldier who is also hiding in this house. The two of you are separated from the living room by a single curtain. In the living room the policeman who owns this house, who is a member of the Resistance, is drinking whisky with a Nazi Officer, because the policeman's cover is that he is very friendly with the occupying forces, so they are quite often popping round for a quick drink.

The Resistance soldier next to you doesn't really speak much English, although he has picked up a few words listening to the BBC World Service's Band Night – he particularly likes Roy Fox and His Orchestra. But he decides to take this opportunity, whilst the two of you are alone, to try out the few words of English he does have, on you. He turns to you and he whispers, "Take it away boys!" – and starts to laugh. And you can't help it, you start to laugh too, and he likes that, so he says it again, a bit louder this time, "Take it away boys!"

And you have to put your fist in your mouth in an attempt not to be heard, as you become hysterical with both fear and laughter. And by some

miracle the Nazi Officer doesn't hear you, and he finishes his whisky and he gets up and leaves.

You are 20 years old. You have made it out of Occupied Holland, through Allied France and back to Britain. You have been through interrogation, debriefing and a medical. You have lost two stone. Your fiancé has believed you to be Missing In Action, possibly dead, for over three and a half months. You send her a telegram at the first opportunity you get. The telegram reads:

"Hello Toots.

Arrived in London in the pink.

Meet me tomorrow Glasgow Central Station 10am."

Moves chair back in line and sits on it.

You make it home to Scotland, and over the next few months, you find out two things. You find out that the man who forged your identity card, and the man who took your photograph to go on it, were both executed for helping men like you. And you find out that you are now the member of a club – The Caterpillar Club. And you are a member because you managed to save your own life using a caterpillar silk parachute. They send you a membership badge – that you will choose to wear under your lapel in the future - a small brass badge in the shape of a Caterpillar.

Stands, moves stage left.

Over the next few years you lose touch with everyone in The Netherlands who helped you. And you never talk about this story to your friends or even your family.

Until one afternoon, years later, when there is a knock at your door. You are at home because you are recovering from an operation, and your wife goes to answer the door, and although she has never met the man who is standing there before, she knows instantly who he is: he's the farmer who hid you on the night you landed in Holland. He has been in London on business. He contacted the RAF to find out your address. For reasons that you will never bother to investigate, the RAF told him that you were dead. But he told the RAF that that was impossible, because if you were dead, he would know. So he took from the RAF what they thought was your last known address, and he got on a train and he's come and found you.

> You haven't seen each other for over 30 years. You've got a lot of catching up to do. So you invite him in for a cup of tea.

There are events in that story that I find amazing—literally incredible. But because he rarely talked about it, by the time I became aware of it, probably in my early teens, the story had become a family legend, upon which we unknowingly elaborated. Instead of having to borrow a bike to get to the farmer's house at the start of the story, we used to tell a version in which he landed in the field in pitch darkness. As he stood up a hand grabbed his arm and a voice said simply, "Run!" And he did—presumably dragging the parachute behind him. Rather than hiding in an alcove with the Resistance soldier, we told a version where the two of them were hiding under the very same table at which the Nazi officer was sitting, and my grandad had to physically restrain the soldier from leaping out to attack him. All hidden only by the tablecloth.

As I got older, and began to piece more and more of the story together, I became increasingly aware of how far it was from my own experience. I felt that the story should at least be recorded in full, as he had experienced it, without exaggeration. For his family, if no one else.

But also, instinctively, I felt that this private, family story should be told publicly. That it should be remembered with, or to, other people. People who did not know him. When I asked my grandad if he would be up for that, he said simply, "Why not?"

Originally I had thought it would be a short film. I went to visit with a video camera and recorded him telling me the story, with him also reading from a written account he had already made. But in an attempt to stop the camera feeling intrusive, I put it on the far side of the room, and the framing was bad. He also got upset a couple of times as he told me the story, and I just was not sure about using the video footage at all. Looking back, I can see I also felt some dissatisfaction with the feeling that videoing it was archiving the story, rather than telling it. The form felt too generic, not individual enough, even though it was him on camera. So it sat there, on the shelf for a bit, literally and metaphorically.

Meanwhile, we began work on a show called *The Lad Lit Project*. Originally called *Writing Backwards*, it was intended to be a three man show that I would direct. My plan was that the show would play with the formula (as I saw it) for the lad lit novels that were so popular in the

late 1990s.[4] Three men would tell their stories thinking they were the protagonist only to find out that they were supporting characters in each other's narratives.

But over the course of the summer of 2004, a combination of conceptual, logistical and funding reasons led to the show becoming a solo performance. One strand of the show is a series of analyses of who I am: medical statistics, astrology, graphology, blood profiling and so on, the contradictions of which are gently pointed out. A larger strand is a series of life chapters borrowed from other men's lives. These are true stories told to me by acquaintances, friends and family during the research process for the show; stories of a time when something changed, when the person understood something differently. These stories are told to the audience in second person singular, positioning the listener, whatever their gender, as the protagonist. The show argues, simply, that it is these experiences—or your equivalent of them—that make you who you are.

During the making process I was reading *The Five People You Meet In Heaven*[5] by Mitch Albom. One of the chapters is a war story. Sitting reading it in Bragazzi's, the Italian café-deli just around the corner from our rehearsal space in Sheffield, I became aware that I was thinking, or feeling, two things. The first was, "Why isn't my grandad's story in the show?" The second was, "I really want to get home and play *Medal of Honour*[6] on the Playstation."

This contradiction seemed to me to be significant. When I was 19, I was wondering what university to go to. My grandad had to decide whether or not to jump out of a burning plane. "Yet here I am," I thought, "part of the generation for whom the Second World War is an entertainment engine."

By this point in the process my co-director, Rachael Walton, had said to me, "You need a chapter in this show about being scared. About being properly afraid." Back in the rehearsal room the next day I tell her

[4] Some examples that were important to me are Tim Lott's *White City Blue*, Harry Ritchie's *The Friday Night Club*, Paul MacDonald's *Surviving Sting* (set in my hometown of Walsall) and Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*.

[5] Albom (2004).

[6] EA Games, 2003.

all this, and she says, "Tell James the story." James Bush[7] is an MA student on placement with us. I sit down with him and tell him the story. It seems to fit.

And as we started structuring the show, finding the right place for my grandad's story (definitely not the finale, we knew that much) something struck me that I had not really thought about before. A detail that we did not need to exaggerate as a family.

The plane is shot, but it does not explode. It catches fire. My grandad—strange of course to call him my grandad here—this 19-year-old kid, the navigator, this 19-year-old kid and his mate, the pilot—it's a two-man crew—neither of them have done a parachute jump before.

The navigator jumps first.

Open Your Parachute

Remember what you decided, heads or tails? Flip the coin now.
If you called it right, your parachute opens.
If you called it wrong, your parachute does not open.

My grandad jumps first and his parachute opens. His cigarettes fall from his boot, and he is pissed off about that. And then the pilot falls past him, and his parachute does not open.

And what I never asked my grandad is, were there two parachutes sitting on a rack, that they had to pick between them? Or, more likely I know, did they pack their own?

Either way, it feels terrifyingly 50/50 to me. And if the coin had landed the other way, I would not be here telling you the story, more than 70 years later.

Back in 2004, we decide to call the chapter *Caterpillar*.

Rachael Says

There are some things only very close collaborators can ask you. At some point in the making process, probably November 2004, possibly that first day I tell the story to James, Rachael sits me down in our studio in Sheffield and, gently, asks me a question.

[7] Other Jameses working on *The Lad Lit Project* were James Stenhouse (also on a devising and dramaturgy placement), and James Harrison, lighting designer.

My grandad, she points out, is an old man. In his late 70s. If this show tours for several years, there is the possibility that he could die whilst I am still performing the show. How would I deal with that? And I cannot really remember what my answer was, other than the fact that we kept the story in the show.

An Email From Gordon

November 2007. My grandad is not well. He has stopped getting out of bed. He no longer shaves every day.

I visit him at home in Walsall, and my two and a half year old daughter is delighted by the fact that he lives in a bungalow, running circuits of the house from her Mum, and my cousins, in the living room, to me and her Big Grandad in the front bedroom.

I wonder at the time if she will remember this. I wonder at the time what her earliest memory will be when she is older.

The following weekend, Saturday 10 November, I am at Prema Arts Centre in Uley, in Gloucestershire. I send my grandad a postcard from my travels, as I often do. After being almost continually on the road for 2005, the tour of *The Lad Lit Project* has slowed down to a civilised handful of gigs a year. A nice pattern is beginning to emerge: promoters who like the show continue to programme it, either in their new venue when they move jobs, or in this case a third visit to Prema. After the show, Gordon Scott, who runs the venue, tells me that this third viewing was his favourite, because he could hear the emotion in my voice during the Caterpillar story. We talk about my grandad.

The day after the show is Remembrance Sunday and I observe the two minutes' silence in a car park in the centre of Dursley, the town nearest to Uley. A scattering of us around the car park. A couple of people stood outside the building that overlooks it. All of us remembering privately. A firework goes off to mark the end of the two minutes, and I get in the car and drive home.

On the day my postcard arrives, my grandad passes away. I get a missed call from my Mum, and one of those non-specific "can you call me?" answer phone messages that you know means Bad News. I call her back, standing in the street in Leeds, and she tells me. I ask her how she is. We begin to make arrangements. I will talk at the funeral service.

It feels appropriate somehow, to let Gordon know this news, and the next day I email him. He writes back:

"Since you were here, I've thought a lot about the story of the man on the bike wearing the Deaf & Dumb sign and latterly wearing the caterpillar pin under his lapel… I'm sending you my best wishes and wistful thoughts of a man who I never met but whose story continues to affect me."[8]

And reading Gordon's email at my desk a couple of days later, that's when I finally cry.

A Memory

Grandad and I were rarely alone. We saw each other at family events, with a bit of a crowd. Or when I went to visit I would usually be with my mum or my dad.

Thinking back now, I can only remember a handful of occasions when I was an adult that we were alone together. One was when my nanny was ill in hospital. Another was recording his war story.

A third was when we went out for lunch together, shared a bottle of wine. I was probably in my early 30s. When it struck me at the time that this was an unusual situation, I think I was momentarily concerned about whether we would have enough to talk about. But of course there was nothing to worry about; if anything my grandad, by then in his 70s, was wittier, funnier, more demonstrative, even better company, than ever. This is one of my favourite memories of him, lunch at the Three Crowns pub, out along the Sutton Road in Walsall.

An Act of Remembrance

At my grandad's funeral I talked about an image I have of him in my head, sitting on the cliff at Cape Wrath. This is another story that the family had turned into something of a myth—though it was much less eventful than the Caterpillar story.

> I remember him telling me about one of these jaunts really clearly. I was 19, he was 62 and he'd just got back from Cape Wrath, which is the most north-westerly point of mainland Britain. The top left hand corner of Scotland, if you like.

[8] Scott (2007).

> We were sitting at the kitchen table, which was laden with food, as it always was when there were visitors. My nanny was there and I was visiting with my dad. And this is the story of the journey that I remember him telling me that afternoon.
>
> He'd got a lift into Birmingham with his son, his youngest son, also called Henry. And then he'd got public transport as far north up the east coast as he could and when the public transport ran out he started to hitch-hike. And his first lift was with a postman whose route went past Cape Wrath. So his first lift took him exactly where he wanted to go, but it took ages because the postman stopped at every farmhouse that he delivered to and went in for a cup of tea and a chat. I don't know that my grandad went in for a cup of tea and a chat as well but I can't really imagine that he was left outside in the van.
>
> When they got to Cape Wrath the postman told my grandad he would be back on that road in about two hours' time so he could pick him up on his return journey if he wanted. My grandad told me, "So I went and I sat on the cliff, I looked at the sea and I thought about my life."
>
> …
>
> And sure enough two hours later, the postman came back, picked him up at the roadside - and my grandad went home.
>
> And after we left my nanny and grandad's that day, my dad said something to me that I've always remembered. He said that listening to my grandad talk about sitting on the cliff and looking at the sea, made him think that my grandad was a man who was happy. A man who was content with his life and everything that had happened in it.[9]

After the funeral my mum and I both thought about going to Cape Wrath, to recreate the journey. But we discovered that it is not possible, at least not in the way we used to tell it. Cape Wrath is at the end of a ten-mile long single track road that does not connect to any other road. It runs from the lighthouse to the ferry point. It is not somewhere you can be dropped off by, for example, a postman, who says he will pick you up on his way back. Because where would he be coming back from?

I remember thinking at the time that my grandad did not need to embellish stories to make himself more interesting, did he? He had had enough real adventures in the war.

[9] From Kelly (2013).

I decided that I would travel to Cape Wrath myself. It felt like it might be a story I would like to tell. A story about family, and the stories that families tell. Family myth-making. I recorded my mum telling her version of the story of grandad's journey, too. It was just as I had always told it.

Then my mum dug out my grandad's diary of the journey: a series of letters written to my nanny whilst he was away, detailing everything about his travels, down to squares of chocolate eaten and shots of whisky drunk (always referred to euphemistically as "a medicinal" or "fortification"). Using these I was able to figure out what journey I actually needed to retrace.

My grandad travelled to Cape Wrath on Tuesday 20 September 1988, and in 2011, the 20 September was again going to fall on a Tuesday. This felt too good a coincidence to miss, so I booked my journey for exactly the same dates.

Eight hours by coach to Inverness.

5½ hours by (mini)bus to Durness; the 804, the longest stopping bus route in Britain.

Overnight in a hostel.

A two-mile walk to the ferry point.

Twenty minutes in eight-man boat across the Kyle of Durness.

Thirty minutes by minibus to the Cape Wrath lighthouse.

It was only having got there that I realised, to my own surprise, that this journey was, of course, an act of remembrance. I decided that I would go and drink a shot of his favourite whisky for him. I do not like whisky, and I do not know very much about it. But I do know that his favourite whisky was Famous Grouse, so that's what I drank.

Cape Wrath became a simple story-telling show, performed in a minibus for audiences of 14.[10] In it I tell the family legend of my grandad's journey, the story of his real journey, and the story of my journey, including my realisation that this was an act of remembrance. When I explain this in the show, and drink a whisky, I am also talking about the show itself, of course. As well as recalling this private moment of

[10]Or thereabouts. Sometimes 15, occasionally 20. It depends on the exact model of minibus, which is often actually a converted van. After researching it, this is something I now know quite a lot about, but rarely is anybody as interested in it as me and the chap at the van hire place are.

remembrance, the show acknowledges its own dual role: performance of, and as, commemoration.

And I say:

> In all but one of my memories of my grandad, he's bigger than me. Taller and broader. This used to be his suit. When I first borrowed it when I was 19, it was way too big. It's still too long in the leg, you can see I have to wear it turned up; he didn't. I seem to have filled the jacket out a bit as I've got older, but mainly around the waist rather than the chest.
>
> But in my last memory of my grandad, he's smaller than me. Smaller than himself.
>
> He was unshaven, which was unusual for him. And he'd stopped getting out of bed. Too much effort.
>
> And I don't know if this is daft, but I feel I should be able to say that I knew, I understood, at the time, that this would be the last time that I saw him alive.
>
> But I didn't.
>
> Cheers, Grandad.[11]

Then I drink the whisky. A real whisky, to drink a real toast.

Looking at the Sea

The show reveals that his two hours sitting thinking about his life did not happen at Cape Wrath. It happened the following day, a few miles east, sitting under a rocky outcrop on Sango Bay. Sheltering from the rain. I had been sure to follow his footsteps there, too.

I had always imagined that "thinking about his life" meant thinking about the past. Thinking, no doubt, about that time when he was 19, and did not know if he would ever get home, whether he would ever see his family again. But in rehearsal, Rachael pointed out that it could also mean thinking about his future. So at that point in the show my telling of his story slips into future tense, explaining what will happen for the rest of his stay in Durness and his journey back to Inverness.

[11] Kelly (2013).

Fig. 8.2 Third Angel's *Cape Wrath* in performance at WROUGHT Festival, Sheffield (2016) (Photo by Joseph Priestley)

Writing this now, six years later, I realise that of course my grandad did not *need* to exaggerate to make himself more interesting. But having now read his incredibly detailed diary of the journey, and having now told this simple travelogue many times, I realise that what he understood was the value of a couple of tweaks and a bit of editing in the service of good storytelling. After all, that is the version I remembered (Fig. 8.2).

His Name Is

One of the reasons I wanted, or needed, to make *Cape Wrath*, is that in *The Lad Lit Project*, I tell his story anonymously. I never say he is my grandad. I never tell you his name.

In *Cape Wrath*, there is a running motif about how and when you are travelling, or at least when I was travelling on that particular journey, you meet strangers and chat to them, sometimes for several hours. Then, as you are about to go your separate ways, you ask the stranger their name, and you tell them yours. And then you say goodbye.

The language teacher on the Sheffield to Inverness coach.
Her name is Sandy.
The driver of the 804 bus from Inverness to Durness (and back).
His name is Alan.
My grandad. His name is Henry.
Henry Radcliffe.
Cheers, Henry.

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CHAPTER 9

On Leaving the House: The Loss of Self and the Search for "The Freedom of Being" in The Wooster Group's *Vieux Carré*

Andrew Quick

Writing, Memory and Presence

> *What is it like being a writer? I would say it is like being free.* (Williams 2007, p. 231)

These lines appear in the final chapter of Tennessee Williams' *Memoirs*, first published in 1972, some eleven years before his death in 1983. Williams expands on what might constitute freedom a little later in the paragraph, observing that, to "be free is to have achieved your life", and goes on to outline some of freedom's key features:

> It means the freedom to stop where you please, to go where and when you please, it means to be voyager here and there, one who flees many hotels, sad or happy, without obstruction and without much regret. It means the freedom of being. And someone has wisely observed, if you can't be yourself, what's the point of being anything at all? (Williams 2007, p. 231)

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The crisis that erupts when you cannot be yourself is felt by many of Williams' protagonists. One only has to think of Brick in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), Blanche Dubois in *A Street Car Named Desire* (1947) or Catherine Holly in *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) to name but a few. Indeed, Williams' fiction is littered with those who find it impossible to be themselves and his narratives are often structured around the tragic consequences that arise from suppressing or sublimating desire, of not facing up to what and who one really is. The act of writing, on the other hand, would appear to be the place where Williams can locate the truth, can corral desire and where he can ultimately be himself. Writing is an activity that reveals a means to escape the unsatisfactory nature of daily life and opens it out onto something more intense, more veracious, something that is intimately connected to living itself. As Williams tells us, "I am only really alive when I'm writing" (Shilling and Fuller 1997, p. 270).

Perhaps then, it is no surprise that Williams places the figure of the writer at the centre of what many see as one of his most autobiographical plays, *Vieux Carré* (1977), which, although started in 1938, was not staged until 1977. The story centres on a rooming house in New Orleans and the people that live there. What unfolds is a series of encounters between a newly arrived young writer (named the Writer) and Mrs Wire, his landlady; Nightingale, a gay street painter; Jane, who is dying of leukaemia and her lover, Tye, who is a drug-addicted, strip-joint barker, and Mary and Maud, two elderly women who have fallen on hard times and who are both slowly starving to death. The play opens with the figure of the Writer downstage attempting to recall the inhabitants of 722 Toulouse Street, New Orleans. His words are redolent with the force and loss of recall as he speaks the following lines:

> Once this house was alive, it was occupied once. In my recollection it still is but by shadowy occupants like ghosts. Now they enter the lighter areas of my memory. (Williams 2000, p. 5)

What we bear witness to, in this moment, is the Writer's process of recall, a process, as the play unfolds before us, that begins to reveal for him what he really is, what he really desires, unveiling that crucial period of time in his youth where he encountered what he describes as his "true nature". As the Writer states in the opening lines of Part II (scene eight) of the play,

> Instinct, it must have been (*He starts typing*) directed me here, to the Vieux Carré of New Orleans, down country as – a river flows no plan. I couldn't have consciously, deliberately, selected a better place than here to discover – to encounter – my true nature. (Williams 2000, p. 69)

Whilst this act of recollection as writing (remember, the Writer is typing as he speaks) is imbued with a sense of nostalgia, it is a looking back that is not fastened on to the past in order to invoke a lost landscape of youth or experience, but one that points to opening a door onto a future, where in the act of knowing oneself, the writer might be able to begin his life again. This is the "cacophony of sound" that the stage directions describe on the final page of *Vieux Carré*, what Williams calls "the waiting storm" of the writer's future, "mechanical racking cries of pain and pleasure, snatches of song" (Williams 2000, p. 115). This future, marked by the clarinet's repeated call, is not mapped out for the Writer, it is not peopled or haunted by the ghosts of his past. In a sense, through his coming into being through self-awareness, they have been expunged ("This house is empty now", the final lines of the play). The future, Williams intimates, is a more open terrain, one whose possibility is invoked through the mythologies of the American landscape, the journey West accompanied by his musician friend Skye, whose clarinet playing promises a raft of new experiences, ones that are built on the structures of now knowing what the Writer truly is.

The opening moments of The Wooster Group's performance of *Vieux Carré* (2009) explicitly places the act of writing at the heart of the stage action. Here we see Ari Fliakos, as the Writer, walking in the space and then sitting with a computer keyboard on the stage left of the two raised platforms. We also see footage of hands moving rapidly across the keyboard of an old typewriter on the central upstage flat-screen TV monitor. The keyboard rarely leaves its position downstage on the platform and is always on the edge of our vision as the play's twelve scenes unfold before us. The performance is punctuated throughout by the figure of the Writer at his keyboard engaged in the act of writing and the show's soundtrack echoes with the click-clack of typing, constantly reminding us that the play's incarnations are all the product of writerly imaginings.

The sound of writing is heard right up to the final moments of the performance and peaks with the Writer's aggressive pummel of the keyboard as if to mark a full stop, or "period" to use the North American term, at the end of the penultimate line. The story ends with the

painful but necessary acknowledgement of the fragility of experience and its deep connection to memory; how in the leaving of a place all one is left with are the echoes, the ghostly traces, of people who were once so earthily present. The silence that then accompanies, "This house is empty now," would seem to indicate that it is *via* the act of writing, of completing the story, of putting in the concluding full stop, that the house's ghosts are expunged. The act of writing seems to have exiled those constraining thoughts and memories, that have stopped the Writer from exiting through the house's door (something he describes as being frightening) and braving a new future—a future that, ironically, would seem to be marked by the absence of writing, since we no longer hear the sound of the keyboard, a future that is now free from the constraints imposed by the house's occupants and what they once symbolised. Not that the opening of the door onto this future is easy. As Mrs Wire explains to the Writer in the final scene, "Be careful of the future. It's a long ways for the young. Some makes it and others git lost". And asking if the Writer can see the door, the Writer replies, "Yes – but to open it is a desperate undertaking.…!" (Williams 2000, p. 116). The concluding, lighter, click of the keyboard, that immediately follows the last line of the play, would seem to echo the final closing of the door as the writer leaves the house behind him and moves on. It is this final click that closes (shuts down) the windows of the house, which are created through the TV monitors at the back of the platforms, it is this click that doubles as both the performance's ending and also the final parting from the house itself—the house of 722 Toulouse Street of *Vieux Carré* and also the playhouse within which we have all just witnessed The Wooster Group's version of the text.

This figure of the on-stage writer has featured in a number of Wooster Group shows, most explicitly in *House/Lights* (1999) where Tanya Selvaratnam sits just off centre, stage right, and *via* the action of typing on the keyboard, appears to be writing the text of the performance as it unfolds before us. Similarly, dramaturges and translators have a writer-like role in *Brace Up!* (1991) and the character of Sue in *Frank Dell's The Temptation of St. Antony* (1987) also appears to be "on the book" of the performance, underscoring the text at work in the production as it is encountered and negotiated by the performers before the audience. These, figures, I would like to tentatively propose, are not present to police the text, to ensure that a certain textual privileging takes place. Rather, and in a way that uncannily corresponds to Williams'

invocation of the act of writing as being connected to the unveiling of life's complex reality, to explore the figure of the writer as one of a series of elements that are engaged with by the performers to encounter and create moments of truthfulness, instances of "freedom of being", to use Williams' phrase, on The Wooster Group's stage. It is the search for a form of veracity that occurs in the encounter with the materiality of performance itself and one that always involves the presence of the audience.

What I argue in the pages that follow is that the search for the "freedom of being", which Williams describes as providing the impetus for his writing, is similarly sustained by the creation of a dramaturgical environment in which all those engaging in The Wooster Group's performance making process open themselves up to a state of loss. What is being lost, I maintain, is a certain notion of prescribed being that accrues not only in life but also more specifically in the actual rehearsal process itself and is often a product of (theatre/film) training and technique. Disrupting those rehearsal processes that would secure those modes of repetition that normally sustain performance, Elizabeth LeCompte, as The Group's director, focuses on creating structures and scenographic environments that enable a letting go of self that produces moments of presence that are equated with authenticity, truth and self-discovery. If we define commemoration as paying a certain debt to something then it is possible to see the final performance as a commemorative act that is indebted to all the processes that led to its happening now before us as the audience. However, as the following analysis seeks to elaborate upon, this commemorative act is not pursed by The Wooster Group to secure or inscribe meaning or experience but to open up the performance space to the happening now which is the experiential itself.

Losing Self/More Self

> I think the constant battle for me as a director is to find ways that an actor can be always present, always alive, always thinking this is the first and last moment that she's there – doing this thing – within a structure that is so strong and sure. (LeCompte in Kaye 1996, p. 258)

Across a number of interviews completed over thirty years, Elizabeth LeCompte, The Wooster Group's director, repeatedly places an emphasis on the pragmatic dealing with texts as one of the key tropes of her approach as a director. This process is described as one that is "trying

to make it (the script) present to me", as one that is based on a means of "reinventing" the text from the "ground up", from "the way that language resonates in the body to the way – (CLAPS ONCE) – has to be crashed up against and fragmented and then reformed" (Kaye 1996, p. 257). According to LeCompte the essential truth of the text does not lie within it, brought to the surface through the dynamic of interpretation, mined as it were by the director and actor. Rather, LeCompte intimates, truth emerges out of The Wooster Group's encounter with the text and this encounter can only take place in the space and time of the theatre event itself. LeCompte refuses the possibility of making meaning outside of the theatre event, describing such an action as an impossible withholding, claiming that for her the meaning making activity only happens in the space, in the "moment of the theatrical act" (Kaye 1996, p. 256). In this sense, the text, the ideas and material that are brought into the rehearsal room, are confronted and negotiated in the activity of performance making and, in many ways, the performance that we witness as the audience is always a continuation of this process. As audiences we become witnesses and participants in the process of encountering as it unfolds before us.[1] And this unfolding also involves us—sensually, experientially—as we also crash up against the systems of contradiction, of play, of fragmentation and reinvention that appear before us on the stage. The audience is also affected by the play of technology, the processes of fragmentation and abstraction that take place on the stage and by the sensual impress of sound and image. Just as the actors deal with the material encounter that LeCompte sets up, we as an audience also have to deal with those that are dealing with the theatrical activity taking place on her stage. Interestingly, LeCompte describes this process of reinvention as one that is "akin to writing" and articulates it as a modality of thinking: "I just have my characters, my words, my colleagues, all materialised on the stage. Writers do it in their head. I can't" (Kaye 1996, p. 259). For LeCompte, her stage becomes a kind of headspace within which she moves "all the little elements of ideas around the stage to see what it means" (Kaye 1996, p. 260). Hence the stage becomes a place of thinking, a place where ideas are put into motion. It is a place where thinking *occurs*, it is not a place where thinking is repeated.

[1] LeCompte explicitly uses the term witness to describe the audience's function in performance in David Savran's *Breaking the Rules: The Wooster Group*, New York, TCG, 1988, p. 45.

This begins to explain why LeCompte tells us across many interviews that one of her constant concerns is to keep the room dynamic, ensuring, as long-time collaborator and performer Kate Valk explains, that the room remains "kinetic" (Quick 2007, p. 219). This dynamism, this keeping-things-in-motion, is based on the idea that the performer relinquishes a certain modality of control, one that necessitates that the actor be spontaneous, be in a state of heightened awareness, be alive to the moment, and be really "listening" to the room, as LeCompte puts it. What LeCompte creates are structures that demand that the performer has to abandon habitual ways of being on the stage in order to bear the impress of the experiential and to discover what might really be there, to locate the "freedom of being", as Williams words it. As LeCompte explains in the final interview of *The Wooster Group Work Book*, "I like to get at what's at the root: where's the real pleasure, where's the real impulse" (Quick 2007, p. 267). LeCompte maintains that this state of heightened awareness, what she sometimes describes as "presence" when questioned, occurs in the performer's confrontation or "conversation" with formal pattern. As she words it, the formal pattern "will tend to allow the performer to get lulled into feeling safe" but that within the pattern there will always be what she describes as "holes that pop up", which are also "part of the form." This demands that the performer be "tremendously vigilant" and "aware of everything behind you and in front of you, of the entire structure" (Kaye 1996, p. 258). What is fascinating in her interview with Nick Kaye, is that LeCompte seems to be implying that this process is one that is not only experienced by the performer but also by the spectator. It is a vigilance that works on both sides of the stage. As LeCompte comments, "the audience is there. They're the air that you breath. The audience is the other part of the exploration process for theatre… they should be part of the flow of the whole" (Kaye 1996, p. 258).

More Themselves Than in Life

When Valk describes what is at the "root" of her own mode of performance, she often invokes the metaphor and the physical reality of "the mask" to describe a means for moving beyond her own desire to generalise and control. For Valk, the mask appears in many forms. It is most obvious in the use of blackface in *Route 1 & 9* (1981), *L. S. D. (…Just the High Points…)* (1984) and *The Emperor Jones* (1993), but it is also at

work in the persona of the facilitator in *Brace Up!* and *Fish Story* (1994), and in the on-stage relationship with the video camera, the TV monitors and in-ear technologies in *House/Lights* (1999) and *To You, The Birdie! (Phèdre)* (2002) and I have no doubt it is at work for her in the performance of *Vieux Carré*. Indeed, it is also a term that appears in notes that LeCompte provided for the performance of *Fish Story* and *The Emperor Jones* for the Vienna Festival in 1993. Here LeCompte writes: "Actors are searching for masks of themselves – not for character. Who they are on stage is who they are on stage – period. They must be more 'themselves' than in life" (LeCompte 1993, p. 11).

The mask, however, is not solely a device that disguises and hides the personality of the performer. Nor is it a Brechtian device to expose how the operations of power and ideology shape social structures through the non-psychological medium of *gestus*. The mask, for LeCompte and Valk, has a number of functions. It creates a distance between the performer and the audience. In short, the mask sets up a barrier between a two-way process of potential psychological identification: the performer with the audience and the audience with the performer. The mask also pushes aside the pressure of always having to embody the character psychologically that is formed in the fictional world being negotiated on the stage. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, the mask works to displace the performer's construction of their own subjectivity, the requirement to *psychologically be* themselves on stage. The mask thus operates as a means through which the performer is able to let certain notions of the self fall away. This loss leaves the performer "free" to engage as immediately as is possible with what the stage presents to them. In an unpublished interview from 1991, Valk explains this process by referring to the function of the mask in Noh Theater: "They say the mask is the device that allows for "spiritual possession" because you deny your own self by donning the mask, and then you deny the existence of the mask" (Valk 1991). In the Noh tradition, the mask acts as a barrier to the representation of an individual's subjectivity. Then, in a crucial second stage, where the mask itself is denied, the performer moves into the complete state of dispossession (thus able to be spiritually possessed), which allows contact with the immediacy (the "reality") of the on-stage experience. This is why the use of the mask is such a liberating device for Valk: "You truly discover through this two-step process of denial – first by denying your own physicality, and then by going a step further within your own consciousness to deny the existence of the mask" (Valk 1991). LeCompte, in

her notes for the Vienna Festival, also indicates that the encounter with technology also forces the performer to engage in a similar transformative process: "The TV performers face a monitor which they use as a mirror. The mirror/monitor is used as a means of transformation from self to 'more self'" (LeCompte 1993, p. 11). Technology, TV monitors, are there to induce mask-like changes in the performer, one that strips away the self of the performer to reveal the "more self" that LeCompte is in search of.

In this sense one can locate LeCompte's stage as a place for discovery, for searching and for finding out. In the act of surrendering a certain construction of self-hood something else must be created in its place. The implication here is that the interaction with the scenic landscape might reveal something profound about the performer—that it somehow exposes who and what they really are. The "more" of the self that LeCompte invokes is the self that the performance induces, one that, because of the acute demands made by being on the stage, is always more intensely there, always more present, than in everyday life. In short, the act of having to perform on The Wooster Group's various stages produces a profound revelation of self in the very activity of having to give up, to lose, what the subject thinks s/he knows about him/herself. This notion of heightened awareness (the "more" of the self), that there is always something new to be discovered through the act of performance, is elaborated upon by Ron Vawter in relation to his performance of Vershinin in *Brace Up!*:

> It wasn't about my ability to impersonate or 'be' Vershinin. What was very important was that I find ways of being myself, as best I could, publicly… It's a very difficult thing to describe, I don't even know what this process is. In some ways it's the mystery of my life, and I sort of hope that I die before I discover the answer to it. It's sort of the thing that still makes me want to go on the stage because I'm still trying to figure out what it is I'm doing in front of an audience. There are no lessons to be learned, but I'm still interested in finding out who I am in front of an audience. (Vawter 1991)

According to Vawter, his work with The Wooster Group is intimately involved in a process of self-revelation ("ways of being myself"), with the demand that he tests out who he is in relation to the material that is encountered on the stage. His search is "to figure out what's there."

What LeCompte, Vawter and Valk are each invoking here is the necessity to have an ethical relationship with what takes place on the stage with and before audiences. The relationship is ethical because to "figure out what's there" entails a willingness (an openness) to surrender oneself to the immediacy that is the experience of what is being encountered. Ethics is not necessarily a mode of discovery, although finding out is inevitably part of the ethical process. It is a mode of judgement: what to do next, now that I know this; how to be in the future now I have had this experience? It is a mode of judgement that proceeds without, to borrow from Lyotard, predetermined criteria, one that demands an imaginative or inventive way of responding to the immediacy—the occurrence—of the event that is the performance.[2] It is a mode of judgement that we see the Writer battling with at the end of *Vieux Carré* as his writing halts as he works out what is to be done next, how he exits the space: "I stood by the door uncertainly for a moment or two. I must of have been frightened of it…" (Williams 2000, p. 116). The act of exiting is difficult, even terrifying. What the Writer sees through the open door is "the waiting storm of his future." Perhaps alluding to Walter Benjamin's reference to Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, in his essay "On the Concept of History", Williams implies that progress (moving forward) is always built on the destruction of the past (Benjamin 2003, p. 392). This final departure demands a letting go of the past, of the people, of the experiences, the personal history, that have shaped the Writer up to that moment. Benjamin argues that history is always haunted by the time of the present in the moment by moment encounter with what is considered to be the past. He observes that history "is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled full by now time" (Ibid., p. 395). Consider the penultimate sentences of the play:

> They're disappearing behind me. Going. People you've known in places do that: they go when you go. The earth seems to swallow them up, the walls absorb them like moisture, remain with you only as ghosts; their voices are echoes, fading but remembered. (Williams 2000, p. 116)

[2] I am drawing on Jean-Francois's Lyotard's concept of ethics here, which owes a great debt to Kantian thinking on ethics, aesthetic judgment and the sublime. See especially Lyotard's *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Minneapolis, 1988; see also James Hatley's "Lyotard, Levinas, and the Phrasing of the Ethical." In H. J. Silverman (Ed.), *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics, and the Sublime,* London, Routledge, 2002, pp. 15–83.

The freedom that the Writer yearns for necessitates that the past be abandoned, that people are given up to memory and to the continuing process of forgetting (which, of course, is a kind of remembering). Perhaps what the Writer is pursuing here is a form of writing that enables the radical forgetting that permits the escape into freedom that is invoked in the performance's ending. And this freedom is the freedom that is the "now". The Writer's final lines "This house is empty now" would seem to open out the final release from a certain concept of history that has held him back and herald a new era of the experiential where he can be what he is.

It would seem then, that the artistic journeys made by Williams and The Wooster Group are, in uncanny ways, intimately interwoven, each looking to find the truth in a moment, one in the instant of writing and the other in the instant of staging, in which writing is always, in some form, present. Each would seem to rely on the state of being alive or being "live", which is one way to describe the state of realness on the stage invoked through the metaphor of the mask above, as the place where truths can be found and a profound revelation of a self-hood communicated. The use of the mask in The Wooster Group's *Vieux Carré*, as mentioned above, is not overt but it appears in subtle guises. It is evident in the more obvious use of facial make-up, but also in the elaborate composition of costumes, wigs, glasses, prosthetic penises, *et cetera* that are used not only to differentiate the characters but also as a kind of subtle dampening of the performer's notional self-hood. This device, this setting aside of a certain condition of self-hood, promotes moments of heightened presence, presence that is unforgettably disturbing in its charge and connectedness to those of us watching in the theatre.

The act of writing, as a technology, also acts as mask in *Vieux Carré* in that it is through the activity of writing that the Writer comes to a profound understanding of what he is by the play's ending, even if he cannot put into words what this understanding is or entails. It is no accident that LeCompte stages the act of writing as a technological process, one that is marked by the computations of the word processor rather than the graphic markings of pen or pencil. What we witness in *Vieux Carré* is a writing that occurs directly into the machine and it is in the act of giving oneself up to the machine that previously unknown selves might make their appearance. What might be critical here is to acknowledge how corporeal writing is, even in relation to the keyboard, as Fliakos's hands fly across its surface, fingers seemingly producing text as memory, as momentary nows, given presence through a series of incessant clicks

and clacks. In the final pause that marks the performance's closure the act of writing halts and in the aporia that opens before us, like the Writer, we can only wait for the act of imagination, of writing, that will step forward and take us in whatever direction follows.

Life Is All Memory

As with previous Wooster Group productions very little is stilled in *Vieux Carré*. Even in the performance's quieter moments flat-screen monitors flicker, a flame framed within a TV box burns brightly, amplified voices are looped and digitally treated, the set moves with clangs and bangs. There are very few moments of silence. Thinking back on the performance, it would seem that The Group's employment of technology, the use of the camera, the video monitors, the amplified voices, the soundscape and the scenic organisation of the space itself (with its two moving platforms, its moving screens), is constructed in order to keep the various apparatuses of theatricality on the move. The performer's body, far from disintegrating or disappearing as a result of technological control, becomes something malleable, a body in flight, an object of potential, composing and recomposing in its play of physical transformation. Sometimes this is quite literal as performers shift characters through swift costume changes. At other moments it as if the performer is following cues from the video excerpts that play in the background or at the edges of the stage. Sometimes it as if the sound track is ordering the material as the performers adopt poses or gestures from Chinese Opera (Nightingale) or snatches of pop songs. In this sense the solidity that might be apparent in the everyday body is assaulted and the performer's corporeality is realigned as a consequence of the battering that the on-stage body receives. This corporeal re-alignment is not confined to the regime of digital re-ordering, of voice and image (*via* the camera or microphone). The performer rarely finds a secure standpoint from which to speak, from which she or he can articulate the body without interference, without manipulation. It is as if, like the characters on the stage, the performers are searching for something, something that is always almost beyond their reach, beyond their knowledge but in the act of searching some extraordinary revelation might be opened out to us.

Similarly, the voice, that part of the body that is usually thought of as the origin of the actor's authority, the very fount of presence (breathing as being, as Derrida puts it), is constantly subjected to technological

processing. Disconnected from particular speaking bodies, speech is often absorbed into a larger soundscape that becomes distorted and cacophonous, layered with other voices, sounds, traces of music, that perfectly captures Williams' notion that our recollection of the past is always accompanied by music. This idea of memory's deep connection to sound is implicated in the way that Fliokas as the Writer apparently conducts the stage action as recall in the performance's closing scene. Here we witness his hands and sometimes elbows moving quickly across the keyboard as he stands and pirouettes to see the result of his writerly imaginations. The performers at such moments seem to be assaulted by these actions, as individual bodies and voices twist and turn as if attempting to locate a secure position in a world in which writing (as sound and movement) is constantly on the move, and forever in a state of fluctuation.

Of course, this state of agitation, this fluctuation, is connected to the act of writing, to the attempt to recall and make alive again. Indeed, perhaps what is being played out here is the very operation of memory itself which, rather than being stilled through an economy of writing that would presume to settle the experiential, is continually realigned and formed through the processes of disconnected associations that include the word, the voice, sound and the full panoply of sensual experience. Memory as recall is imbued with loss, with that falling away that is forgetting and the new associations of memory which accrue in the present moment, the now, of remembering itself. And this is the strange contradiction of remembering and loss that is always at play in all forms of theatre: the fact that what we see on the stage is built from a structure that has the arts of repetition as its basis. Yet, in the actual playing of a moment we are to presume that this moment is happening for the very first time. All of Williams' work is deeply attached to the workings of memory but, as I hope I have intimated above, there is no writing without memory. And the liberation offered by the act of writing, by The Wooster Group's practice of performance, is to find a way of letting go of the past and entering the present through engaging with the dynamics of writing and performing. Williams famously wrote that, "Life is all memory, except for the one present moment that goes by you so quickly you hardly catch it going" (Williams 1963, p. 36). Perhaps, as Williams seems to be saying, catching the moment is an impossible task, one that would truly liberate us if it could be achieved. Whatever the challenge, however, I think this is what all The Wooster Group's work to date has been concerned with: catching the moment going. Catching the moment… gone.

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CHAPTER 10

'The God, the Owner & the Master' (Barthes, 1979): Staging Rites of Passage in the Maritime Crossing the Line Ceremony

Lisa Gaughan

> I boarded the King's ship; now on the beak, Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin, I flam'd amazement: sometimes I'd divide and burn in many places; on the topmast, the yards and borespirit, would I flame distinctly, then meet and join. Jove's lightning's, the precursors o' th' dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary and sight-outrunning were not: the fire and cracks of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune and seem to besiege, and make his bold waves tremble, yea, his dread trident shake. (Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 1.11.196–202)

In William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Ariel delights in giving Prospero an account of the disruption (s)he brings to Antonio's ship. The ship—usually a place of order and hierarchy—will be momentarily disrupted by this illusive sprite. The Ship's Master opens the play by establishing this hierarchy: 'speak to the mariners: fall to't yarely, or we run ourselves

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aground: bestir, bestir' (Shakespeare 1.1.3–4). They seem to foreground that their safe passage will be inevitably disrupted by a force for which they had not accounted. Ariel then appears, and in the version given to Prospero notes the invoking of Jove's lightenings, thunder and dramatic waves. Ariel's tale climaxes in the appearance of Neptune himself, brother of Jupiter and god of the sea. In Ovid's *Metamorphosis, translation by Mary Innes* (1955), Ovid recounts the tale of the flood: how 'Neptune himself struck the earth with his trident; it trembled, and by its movement threw open channels for the waters…Now sea and earth could no longer be distinguished: all was sea, and a sea that had no shores' (Innes 1955, pp. 36–37).

The sea is a dramatic landscape immortalised not just by Shakespeare and Ovid but painters and writers for centuries. The oceans and seas of the world are celebrated, commemorated, mourned and immortalised in tales of travel; in art, literature and acts of performance. Not only is the sea commemorated in art and literature but the drama of its tides and rhythms are detailed in our experiences of visiting the sea as children, reading about it, or seeing and hearing it represented. It contains a cast of theatrical characters: mermaids, monsters and the sea embodied—Neptune himself. Furthermore, the sea as a 'body' is a site of performance in and of itself. It ebbs and flows, makes dramatic risings and fallings and on its surface are sites for human performance in and on the vessels that travel across the waters the ships, crossing the seas of the world, are ships that stage performance in the same way that Ariel illustrates the orchestration of a performance spectacle on board ship in *The Tempest*. In this chapter, I am concerned with the particular performance rituals at the moment that a ship and its crew pass (or 'cross') the equator. This act, and the complex theatrical ceremony it has produced is known as Crossing the Line. TheCrossing the Line ceremony is, as noted by Commander McComas (1998) 'a time-honoured practice in which a ship's crew celebrates safe passage across recognised borders: equator, International Date Line, prime meridian, Arctic and Antarctic circles or any other form of significance on the globe' (McComas 1998). My primary focus here, however is the crossing of the equator.

As noted by Keith Richardson in his 1977 article for *Western Folklore*, the ritual of passing over the equator is also known as the 'Order of the Neptune' and has been performed by sailors of the Western world for over four hundred years. This form of ceremony, however, dates back

even further still. Commander McComas, writing in a Naval Science Research paper in 1998, notes that:

> the crossing the line is nearly as old as seafaring itself, even in antiquity sailors engaged in rituals when crossing certain parallels. Our modern western practice is believed to have evolved from Viking rituals, executed upon crossing the 30th parallel, a tradition that they passed on to the Anglo-Saxons and Normans in Britain. (1998, p. 2)

Initially, McComas and others note that the line crossing ceremony was a form of 'test', for 'land-lubbers' to prove themselves. Richardson further suggests that:

> since men first went to sea it has been quite natural for seafarers to call upon the land-lubbers aboard ship to prove themselves not only capable of standing the terrors, stresses and strains of naval life, but also to prove that they have the courage and strength of character to gracefully accept the rowdy humour encountered in daily shipboard life. (Richardson 1977, p. 154)

McComas further notes that 'early crossing the lines had a fairly serious purpose' that they were 'designed to test the novices in the crew to see whether they could endure their first cruise [*deployment*] at sea' (1998, p. 3 my italics). During Shakespeare's period of writing (circa 1592–1616) the navy, and its exploits and traditions, were very much in the public spotlight in the context of the ongoing British war with Spain (1584–1604). Phillip Hoare observes that 'Shakespeare was familiar with the ocean: he refers to it more than two hundred times in his works and some critics believe that he was once a sailor' (Hoare 2017, p. 18). Furthermore, this period established the reputation of great seafaring legends of the increasing fleet of Queen Elizabeth's Navy, such as Sir Francis Drake who circumnavigated the globe in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Harry Lydenberg, writing in *Crossing in Line* in 1957, gives an account of the sixteenth-century crossing of the line by Drake's own ship:

> Drake had been out of sight of land some 63 days before "passing the line equinoctial the 17. Day [of February 1577]…Wee often met with adurse wind, vnwelcome stormes and to vis (at that time) lesse welcome calmes,

> and being at it were in the bosome of the burning zone, wee felt the effects of sultring heat, not without the affrights of flashing lightningss, and terrifyings of often claps of thunder" May one suppose that if any religious ceremony had marked the crossing that the "Preacher in this imployment would have told us? (Lydenberg 1957, p. 6)

There is an interesting parallel here with Ariel's account of the pain and suffering inflicted on the ships company in *The Tempest*: the flashing lights, the claps of thunder and feeling the effects of being in a particular 'heat' in a particular location. Further accounts suggest that ceremonies in the seventeenth century were deemed (by anyone writing about them) as particularly rough. In the eighteenth century, by contrast, '[they were] designed for the entertainment of the shipboard community—the naval 'family'. As such they could enact the kind of familial tensions…conflicts [of] hierarchy, gender and sexuality' (Russell 1995, p. 140).

The concern here with this ceremony is with particular reference to ships in the British Royal Navy, although as previously acknowledged it is a global ritual. It is appropriate to identify with the British Royal Navy as they have made a point of attaching some significance and importance to the conduct and practices of such a ceremony. In 1946, the British Admiralty printed a pamphlet entitled 'Crossing the Line': An account of the origins of the ceremonies traditionally connected with the line, together with a procedure for the conduct of those ceremonies and examples of the documents associated therewith' (Lydenberg 1957, p. 204). The pamphlet's introduction goes on to say that 'it is not the intention to lay down a hard and fast drill for Crossing the Line. To do so would only be an impertinence, but would ignore such factors as the size of the ship, the local talent available, and the general circumstances prevailing at the time' (ibid.). From a historical perspective, that this kind of document emerges almost immediately after the end of the Second World War has particular significance. 'With the return to the peace routine, however and the obvious necessity to foster an awareness of the old traditions in the minds of the rising generations, many requests have been received for the promulgation of an authentic order of proceedings' (ibid.). It is clear that the Admiralty felt that it was appropriate or timely to issue these procedures at the end of the war. The chaos of war may have blurred the established codes of conduct for this ancient ceremony.

With 'order restored', the stage or site for the performance of this ritual is ultimately and inevitably the ship itself. Also inevitably,

Shakespeare has something to say about ships in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596–1598). He writes that 'Ships are but boards, sailors but men' (1.3.22). So sailors tread the boards of their ships in the same way that actors tread the boards of their vessel, they are in the words of the Admiralty 'the talent available'. The ship itself is both a public performance space wherein the ships company are not only the talent but audience members viewing each other in their designated roles. However the geographical position of the ship means a limited private audience in the middle of an ocean without escape. The ceremony exists in a private, exclusive place. The problems of public-versus-private performance are noted by Jack Santino who suggests that 'the concept of public display is a broad one' (Santino in Bial, ed. 2004, p. 126). Santino goes on to quote Cristina Sanchez Carretero who he suggests 'has examined the phenomenon of public (and private) events being transformed by institutional presentation for the edification of a broad audience of people outside the tradition' (ibid., p. 127). This idea of 'exposing' the private to the public may go some way to further explaining the Admiralty's decision to publish their public document detailing their 'authentic order of proceedings'. So the ceremony remains still private in that it takes place on the ship, but also in some ways now publically exposed. The question of authenticity could be debated further as accounts are largely only accounts by individual ship's crew anecdotally.

Gillian Russell, writing about naval theatrical rituals in the eighteenth century, in her book *Theatres of War* (1995), notes that:

> The most meaningful venue for naval theatricality was the ship itself, a closely knit and complex fighting unit with its own rituals, language and costume. 'A lonely village', in the words of the naval historian Michael Lewis, the ship of the Royal Navy was foreign to the rest of society, a celebrated 'wooden world' of which most civilians knew nothing. (p. 139)

The lonely village of the ships company at sea are an exclusive body of 'performers' reliant on one another in potentially perilous situations. They are forced, on a day-to-day basis, to operate as a community. Thus this presents a number of challenges for them. There are the challenges of navigating the unpredictability of the seas as well as being a logistical focused fighting unit. This fighting unit has the potential for engaging in conflict at any moment in a vast open space which is then somehow forced to pull together. Furthermore, this comes with a sense

of the immediacy at any time. The ship them becomes the lonely village as Gillian Russell describes. Furthermore, it is not too far removed from our own simultaneous 'wooden O' from *Henry V* which debates the possibilities of performance and imagination in a potentially confined space. It becomes, in the theory of the French anthropologist, Marc Auge, a non-place which is:

> that of a closed world founded once and for all long ago; one which, strictly speaking, does not have to be understood. Everything there is to know about it is already known… All the inhabitants have to do is *recognize* themselves in it when the occasion arises. (1995, p. 44)

Given the antiquated nature of the ritual, the sailors on board ship approach their journey to the equator with both the knowledge that the ritual will take place, *and also* the position or character they will occupy within that ritual. Marvin Carlson notes that:

> performance spaces are marked by the traces of their other purposes and haunted by the ghosts of those who have used them in the past… [he goes on to say that] Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks describe this aspect of performance as a balance between 'the host and the ghost'. (Carlson in Govan et al. 2007, p. 139)

All spaces that we encounter retain traces of the past. Houses retain histories of past inhabitants, ships will retain the traces of past crews and past experiences. In the case of the 'Crossing the Line', there may already be knowledge of previous iterations of the ritual taking place on the same ship in the same geographical location. For a very new member of the ship's company, such 'trace' knowledge might not be understood or readable, and yet the knowledge or relationship with the ship and way they are expected to perform will be *learned*. Indeed, the publication of the Admiralty's 'pamphlet' in 1946 formalised these rituals, setting down a template—or *script*—for future generations to 'observe the appropriate ceremonies with the dignity and regard for accuracy to which they are by custom and tradition entitled' (Lydenberg 1957, p. 204).

Within the bounds of the ceremony itself, it is crucial to note how the *Dramatis Personae* of the ships company overturns the entitlement of rank traditionally associated with a ship of the Royal Navy. And yet, it is not only in the ceremony itself that the ship functions as a theatrical space. As Russell suggests:

> The territory of the captain - the quarterdeck- [is] bounded by ritual and symbolism which stressed its significance as a site of authority and privilege. The system of discipline on board ship was and still is inherently theatrical in so far that every act of punishment, ranging from the ritual of a flogging to an admonition by word or look, was played out before others with the potentiality of resistance. There were thus distinct similarities between the theatre and the ship of the line as social institutions. Both conjoined 'rulers' and 'ruled', allowing for many subtle kinds of theatre and counter-theatre. Both were segregated spaces with highly conscious and coded hierarchies. (Russell 1995, p. 141)

The 'normal' hierarchies of daily, shipboard life are 'seemingly and momentarily' dissolved during the Crossing the Line ceremony and made more complex depending on whether you have, as part of a ships company, crossed the line before. The ships company are therefore separated into two groups. The initiated: those that have already completed the ceremony/ritual are known as 'Shellbacks'. The uninitiated are known as 'Polliwogs', sometimes shortened to 'Pollys' or depending on cultural background termed 'tadpoles'.

The structure of the ceremony is clearly divided into three parts. As the ship begins to approach the equator a physical and psychological distance occurs between the Shellbacks and the Polliwogs. A notice from Neptune is issued to the ships' crew as the ship approaches the equator. This notice reads as follows:

> I order and command you to appear before me and my court on the morrow to be initiated in the mysteries of my Empire. If not, you shall be given as food for sharks, whales, pollywogs, frogs and all living things of the sea, who will devour you, head, body, and soul as a warning to land-lubbers entering my Domain without warrant. (Lydenberg 1957, p. 192)

The First Part of the ceremony sees Neptune's Herald enter the ship. This takes place the evening before the crossing. His purpose is to assess:

> … its worthiness to receive on board Neptunus Rex in all his glory. His opinion favourable, Neptune himself comes on board the following day with all his court, and presents Orders and Awards to those Shellbacks who have proven themselves worthy thereof on the Quarterdeck. The third and final phase is when King Neptune retires to the Quarterdeck and supervises the initiation of the tadpoles. (Anon 2012)

This is the point that the Pollys are alerted to their fate. As word spreads to and through the ship's company, the characters begin to establish which group they belong to. As the Herald enters the ship in the first part of the ceremony he contacts the ship to find out where the ship is headed:

> *Herald*: I've heard your ships' around, Now tell me, whither bound?
> *Captain*: We sail for Singapore,
> We've steamed for many a day,
> Now I've got a lot to do,
> So tell me, who are you?
> *Herald*: I am the Herald of the court of his Oceanic Majesty;
> King Neptune ordered me aboard and I'll commit no travesty. (Anon. 2012)

The use of the word travesty is interesting in this instance/script, in that travesty is a comedic practice in 'which compositions… aim at exciting laughter (celebration) by the grotesque or burlesque treatments of serious subjects' (Cressy 2000, p. 3). Furthermore, as Howard Pearce notes, 'there is an element of perversity in the travesty, [however] the imitation is not merely destructive, but rather reconstructive' (1979, p. 1152). This is important in the context of this ceremony as what is occurring here is a grotesque performance which will hopefully excite joy and/or laughter. Additionally, the Pollys are being 'reconstructed' as shellbacks once they have completed the ritual and crossed over the line. Furthermore, the most important feature of travesty is that of topicality, that is, that it is only relevant at its own specific moment in history. Thus, as Gerard Genette suggests, 'the travesty becomes outdated precisely for having wished itself to be, and for have indeed been, the taste and manner of a specific moment in time' (1997, p. 62). What is about to be enacted during the ritual therefore would point definitively to the praxis of travesty in that the overturning of normative Naval hierarchy is bound by place (the ship), specific location (the equator) and time. The time is dependent on the time the ship will cross the Equator, however it is usually calculated that the process begins 24 hours before the ship actually crosses the line. Prior to which 'Davy Jones' visits the 'mess decks' to signal the beginning of the ritual/ceremony. The time it takes to undertake the whole ritual is approximately 24 hours. It further calls to mind Mikhail Bakhtin's work on 'forms of popular culture such as

feasts and carnivals… characterised by talking back to the established ruling class ideology, through irreverence, humour, parody and bawdiness' (Fortier 2002, p. 61). This is because these rituals are usually according to Bakhtin particularly time and hierarchically bound.

That the category of Shellback or Polliwog is seemingly regardless of rank on board the ship is to be at odds with the Navy's established hierarchies. For example, if the Captain of the Ship, the ultimate officer in charge has never undertaken this particular ceremony (s)he must undergo the ritual alongside the rest of the ship's crew who haven't undertaken it either. As Gillian Russell notes '[this ritual] thus represents an occasion on which the ship's company could temporarily suspend the divisions of rank and class in an act of social integration, a 'holiday' from the normal pattern of shipboard life' (Russell 1995, p. 140). Here again this finds further resonance with Bakhtin's idea of carnivalistic life:

> For Bakhtin, 'Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without division into performers and spectators'…thus its participants *live* in it' and as '*carnivalistic* life is life drawn out of its *usual* rut, it is to some extent "life turned inside out", "reverse side of the world"'. (Bakhtin in Burrows 2013 p. 333)

In Part II (or *Act Two*) of the performance, Shellbacks are rewarded for their endeavours on board. Recent promotions, which have occurred while the ship has been at sea, are celebrated, and this celebration-within-performance functions as a way of informing the Pollys of what could become of them if they prove themselves, borrowing from the ways in which sailors of previous centuries were similarly expected to. Other rewards are more light-hearted and again carnivalistic in nature—a travesty of promotion: 'since you are the man who sweats and cooks, and stands abuse and ugly looks and tries to keep things hot for noon. I feel you're entitled to the Greasy Spoon' (Anon. 2012).

The final act/scene takes place and the Quarter Deck is occupied by the court of Neptune and the Shellbacks:

> King Neptune, I, Lord of the Sea
> Welcome you all who 'ere you be:
> I am the Lord of the Oceans wide,
> Lord of the Rivers…Lord of the tide,
> My laws are strict, but do not fear,

If you will only persevere
To keep the freedom of the seas,
As recognized by our degrees,
Here are the Bears, the Suds, the Bath;
They are the only certain path
For all who wish to cross the Line,
And be enrolled as sons of mine.
In order then, as we command
Before us let each Tadpole stand
Who has his freedom yet to win…
Enough…My Trusty Men, Begin! (Anon. 2012)

Neptune notes the strict nature of his laws, as even in the carnivalistic nature of this particular ceremony there is an order of service to be observed. He notes again that there are certain characters to be observed and that there is the possibility of a 'dunking' in the bath—a ritual baptism. The ships' crew are then led before King Neptune, his bride Amphitrite and Davy Jones. The King reads the charges against the Polliwogs and sentences them, sometimes to a number of lashes. The Polliwogs then undergo a "ritual death". They are first led before the Royal Baby, a role traditionally been undertaken by the largest member of the ships' crew. In some ceremonies, his stomach will have been smeared with mustard or perhaps chilli sauce and the uninitiated are pushed into the Royal Baby's stomach. Keith Richardson further notes that the penultimate ritual is a "shaving" by the Royal Barber with a huge wooden "razor" after which one is dunked in a tub of water to "cleanse" oneself for the final meeting with King Neptune. Here, then, is the ritual rebirth having proved themselves as capable of standing on board life and passing from Pollys to Shellbacks. At this meeting, King Neptune appears with his entire retinue, Queen Amphitrite and Davy Jones (the keeper of lost ships). In the English Naval tradition, he is often referred to as Duffer Jones. These three characters from seemingly different myths and traditions come together at the site of performance. There is no evidence to suggest that they are anything other than bound by their association with the sea, however what is important is that 'the story narrated by the myth(*s*) constitutes a "knowledge" which is esoteric, not only because it is secret and is handed on during the course of an initiation but also because the "knowledge" is accompanied by a magico-religious power' (Eliade 1963, p. 15). Once this initiation ceremony is over Neptune officially proclaims the Pollywogs to be converted

to shellbacks. It is customary at this point that the pollywogs are presented with a certificate stating that as a Polly they have completed the ritual. Sailors keep possession of these certificates so that should they be crossing the line again they will not be required to go through the ceremony again.

During this 24-hour ceremony there is re-organisation of shipboard life. However I would argue that it is not a complete overturning of hierarchy in the true Bakhtinian sense of the carnivalistic. Contemporary accounts suggest that sailors are acutely aware that the major figures in the performance share a resemblance to Senior Officers on board. Unless they have not participated in the ceremony before: 'Assignments according to rank demand that the ship's captain be given the part of King Neptune, with senior officers playing Davy Jones and Aphrodite in his court' (Richardson 1977, p. 156).

Therefore, whilst the ritual sees the bonding of the polliwogs into a group regardless of rank, some aspect of order is still again being momentarily retained. Victor Turner describes how at the time of undergoing such *communitas* rites, the individual is "neither here nor there" but rather is "betwixt and between the positions assigned arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial" (Turner in Richardson 1977, p. 95). They become, a very temporary community within the shipboard company bonded by the fact that they have become disrupted from their usual positions. In the instruction issued by the Royal Navy in 1946, the normal routine of the ship is actually 'ordered' to be disrupted. As Lydenberg suggests, 'The Ship's Routine should be so adjusted that nothing is done after scrubbing decks' (Lydenberg 1955, p. 205). This adjustment is clearly only that, an adjustment but is a controlled variation of the ships community as the normal order of things.

Raymond Williams defines community as a 'warmly persuasive word' (Williams in Kuppers 1992, p. 95). Inducing us to perceive that it is (though I am sure Williams did not intend this) a warm and comfortable space. In light of this, Petra Kuppers notes:

> Community is a complex concept: how can one understand the tension between people as individuals, and people as members of a group? What are the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that emerge in community-building? There are multiple definitions of community, and analyses of how communities emerge, regulate themselves, and act. (Kuppers 2007, p. 9)

In communities, we negotiate how we 'enact' or 'play out' different interactions whether they be pleasant and harmonious, playful or celebratory. By doing this, certain patterns of behaviour, form, content and structure of performance are established and our interactions depend on the position we occupy in that community. In the ship's temporary community as it crosses the equator, a very temporary liminal state of equality exists; a flattened hierarchy. However, as I have suggested, the community are acutely aware that whilst carnivalistic in practice, order remains underneath. It could be that the community of the pollywogs approach with a sense of trepidation or indeed celebration of the shipboard community. To anchor this more clearly, Richard Barr in *A Room with a View* (2001) makes the following analogy about a particular performance community in which he states, 'the performance community should be understood as a *fleeting* and *provisional* social structure that is offered in theory but only received and achieved in practice' (2001, p. 18). This would seem to be particularly pertinent to this performance. It is of course fleeting as it can only take place in a particular time and location. Furthermore, there is only a provisional and slight disruption of the ship's hierarchy. As part of my research for this Chapter, I interviewed a former Royal Naval Petty Officer who served on board a Royal Navy ship at the time of his crossing the line ceremony in the 1990s, a serving member of the ships' company of the British Royal Navy Ship, HMS Ambuscade (F172) Jason 'Henry' Tudor recounted to me that the polliwogs would be informed that, as they crossed the line, they would experience a 'bump' as they went down and over the equator. Most of them seemed to believe that this would happen and also believed afterwards that they had experienced this 'bump'. Therefore, 'if the drama can be justly said to 'ride on a train of illocutions' then it must be added that these are often oblique and call for an interpretative' reading between the lines' (Elam 1994, p. 170). We could argue that the 'promise' of the bump is something the Pollys will think they are about to experience, even though simultaneously 'knowing' that this is not going to happen in reality. Keith Richardson further notes in his article in *Western Folklore* that:

> the order of Neptune ritual, although expressing the outward appearance of idle horseplay, may in reality be quite similar both functionally and structurally to rituals described as occurring in non-western societies, it might be proposed therefore that the ritual rather than being archaic or

> primitive survival is in reality one method the human mind has devised of re-ordering the structure of society in an effort to resolve the basic paradoxes of human life. (Richardson 1977)

This ritual, that has been played out over hundreds of years, could be a way of making sense of the necessary human interaction of 'blowing off steam' against an enforced hierarchy/community on a shipboard society. I would argue then, that as Marica Eliade in *Myth and Reality* (1963) suggests, the act of repeating myths and stories from the past 'is not [an act] of commemoration… but a reiteration of them' (Eliade, p. 19). So the act of crossing the line reiterates the need to repeat this particular ceremony. It is a chance for the ship's company to repeat the mythical and break away from their version of the ordinary of everyday life. In this case to have the opportunity to albeit briefly break the mundanity of the routine of days, weeks or months at sea. Eliade further suggests that there is a value in the re-enacting of a ritualistic expression stating that:

> To experience that time, to re-enact it as often as possible, to witness again the spectacle of divine works, with the super naturals and relearn their creative lesson is the desire that runs like a pattern through all the ritual reiterations of myths. In short myths reveal the world, man and life have supernatural origin and history. (ibid.)

Eliade notes that myths 'reveal the world' (ibid.). In this way the consistency of this ritual reiteration reveals the world of the 'lonely village of the ship at sea'. In the context of this mythical reiteration here are several patterns that are being revealed, the peculiarities but necessities of a ship's hierarchy, the ongoing connection to the eternal notions of the sea and the mythical creatures that inhabit it as well as a collective celebration of the shipboard community regardless of rank. Out at sea, the crossing the line ceremony can engage its crew in a collective frivolity. Frivolity is transient like the sea, its roots in Latin meaning 'rubbed away'. It is a momentary passing in the same way. Sailors, however, perhaps do not see it as being 'rubbed away'. For them it is a necessary rite of passage. Age nor experience does not define how and when this ceremony takes place for a particular sailor, if it ever takes place at all. It does however become a necessary ritual for any sailor undertaking this particular voyage.

Finally, to return to the ship itself as a site of performance, Barthes describes it as a space to be 'cherished' or perhaps nurtured. Furthermore, that, 'most ships in legend or fiction are… the theme of a cherished seclusion, for it is enough to present the ship as the habitat of man, for man immediately to organise there the enjoyment of a round, smooth universe, of which, in addition, a whole nautical morality makes him as one the god, the master and the owner' (Barthes 1979, p. 67). The site of the ship in this ceremony encompasses Barthes' round smooth universe, resplendent with mythical creatures, carnivalistic in nature and reiterating the commemoration of the ships that have passed before. It sees a 'god' in Neptune. He also becomes the Master of the Ship and for a brief moment in time, in the liminal space of the carnivalistic ritual, the owner of the ship. Furthermore, the participants in the ritual are engaged in what Barthes refers to as this 'theme of cherished seclusion'. Whether Shellback or Pollywog, the ship's crew are engaged in a ritual/ceremony in which they commemorate their journey both geographically and mentally across a metaphorical line. In some ways the site of the ship in this particular time and space could be described as an ideal one for this kind of reiteration. As the German philosopher, Otto Neurath 1882–1945 observed 'sailors…must rebuild their ship on the open sea, never able to dismantle it in dry-dock and to reconstruct it there out of the best materials' (1996, p. 492). The ships crew, like Neptune, are required to adopt and take on the roles Gods, Owners and Masters of their site of performance in the specific place of performance in the middle of the ocean.

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PART IV

Eulogy, Memorial, Grief

CHAPTER 11

Staging Absence and Performing Collaboration in *A Duet Without You*

Chloé Déchery

The following text is the rewritten and extended version of a presentation that offered a reflective insight on the collaborative creative process and making of the performance A Duet Without You *(2015). The original presentation incorporated audio-recorded extracts from Deborah Pearson, a London-based Canadian writer and performance-maker, Simone Kenyon, an English performer with an extensive dance and performance training with an interest in walking practices, and Pedro Inês, an Amsterdam-based Portuguese performer and cinema actor who trained as a dancer and musician.*[1] *In 2012, I contacted and asked each of these artists to join the performance project because of their particular skill set and artistic expertise (writing, walking, dancing) but also because they all had an artistic practice of their own which very much situated them as authors and independent makers with an eye for critical enquiry and an interest in artistic*

[1]This audio montage was presented as part of 'Staging Loss: Performance as Commemoration', a symposium co-convened by Michael Pinchbeck and Andrew Westerside at the University of Lincoln on the 16 June 2016.

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research. They had a voice, an idiosyncratic vision on/around/about performance-making and a signature style that made what they did recognizably distinct, while still embracing openness and experimentation. I wanted to collaborate with these three artists not only because I knew, valued and appreciated their artistic practices, but also because I thought I wanted to know them better and spend more time with them. They yet had to accept my invitation, but I was hoping that, together, we could experience, through our 'collectivity of authors', a shared heterogeneity, perhaps collapsing into an experiment in creative sociability, which would not only inform the performance process but which would also generate the performance's very content and form. A Duet Without You *was developed between 2013 and 2015 and was first shown as a work-in-progress in London, at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and at Toynbee Studios, respectively, on 10 March 2013 and 30 April 2013. The performance piece later premiered at Shoreditch Town Hall, in London, on 9 June 2015, before touring in England in 2015 and 2016.*[2]

A Duet Without You (2015) took as a starting point the idea of 'staging absence'. The initial impulse was to bring a few artists together and to investigate how to make absence visible and felt on stage; how to give absence—or, rather, the absence of the partner, the collaborator, the duettist, the friend—an outline and a weight so as to honour the absentees and make their creative labour visible. With attempting to make the absence of the creative collaborator perceptible, I was not interested in giving into melancholia or in excavating the minute details of what might or might not have happened, but I wanted to test and celebrate the summoning power of live performance, hoping to find a way to give shape to whom-who-is-not-here in creating *from* and *through* what is apparently absent so as to help us apprehend, recognise and value presence itself. So, while we'd be 'staging absence', we'd also try, at the same time, to 'perform collaboration'; to bring, onto the stage, the existence of a group of co-authors, talking through, disagreeing, being together and being apart, with and for an audience. 'Performing' collaboration would be as much about enacting and producing a form of collective creative labour through the sharing of different material (performative

[2] The performance piece was programmed as part of the Practice-as-Research festival at the University of Surrey on the 18 July 2015; at the Caryl Churchill theatre at the University of Roehampton on the 14 October 2015, at the Lakeside theatre at the University of Essex on the 22 October 2015 and at the Waterside Arts Centre in Sales on the 7 April 2016.

writing, choreographic scores, music composition and singing, objects manipulation and so forth) as it would be about embodying, re-enacting, while abiding to and, sometimes, *pretending* to ascribe to a certain ethos of collaborative spirit.

As a consequence of the paradoxical tension between absence and presence, between past (events) and present (performance), between history (what had happened) and memory (how we might remember what had happened), a crucial question ensued around the origins and locations of the artwork. We wondered where the piece would stem from. From what or whose presence the performance would emerge. If the 'Other' might be the artist who is absent from the space where the live performer is standing; is this same performer not also the 'Other' for the artist sitting in her own room, in a distant city, and quietly paying attention? Around what or whose voice do the narratives cohere? Furthermore, how can one locate (and should we try and locate it?) the bodily presence of the artist when her body is moved and moved through, instructed or contaminated by other bodies and other voices? How does the performing-body-made-plural then affect or impact on the notions of signature and authorship?

In regard to *A Duet Without You*, one could say that the notion of authorship is partly deconstructed through the creation of memories and the undoing of the act of remembering itself by the different contributors involved, one of them (myself) present on stage while the other collaborators give their testimonies, their 'versions', through audio-recorded speeches. Yet the show was advertised while on tour as 'conceived and performed by Chloé Déchery[3]'. But if the credits of the show initially re-enforce the idea of a singular 'author', the performance and the way it operates consistently aims to undo this authorship. In one of the first audio recordings broadcasted within the performance, for instance, Pedro claims ownership of most of the ideas behind the show: 'Make sure they feel how positive and motivating I was in this process… let them know how I enjoyed and celebrated everyone's ideas and took them to the next level' (Déchery et al. 2015).[4] Later on, Simone gently

[3]The Shoreditch Town Hall Spring (February–July) 2015 Brochure credited the piece in the following way: 'Conceived and performed by Chloé Déchery, in collaboration with Pedro Inês, Simone Kenyon and Deborah Pearson'. © Shoreditch Town Hall.

[4]A publication of the performance score of 'A Duet Without You' alongside a collection of creative insights, reflections and theoretical contributions on collaboration, absence

disputes the idea of a single authorship: '… and could you please tell them that it was my idea to start in the dark?' (Déchery et al. 2015). The location of a supposedly clearly assigned authorship is muddled up, confused and deliberately ambiguous. Thus *A Duet Without You* does not support so much the declarative re-assertion of the disappearance of the author(s)[5] than the destabilisation of authorship *through* the production and celebration of a multiplicity of authors co-existing, and, at times competing, with one another. Following Foucault's claim on the necessary disappearance of the author in literary writing,

> Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably goes beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. This, the essential basis of this writing is not the exalted emotions related to the act of composition or the insertion of a subject into language. Rather, it is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears. (Foucault 1977, p. 116)

A Duet Without You does not pretend to eradicate the authors (and how could performance, so clearly attached to bodily presence and the production of subjectivity, make up such a claim?), but rather, to destabilise authorship. Who is talking? Who is talking through me? 'Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?' (ibid., p. 138). However, the performance remains organised around an agent, a central presence that is embodied and rooted in the present. On this topic, writer Mary Paterson, who was invited to follow the creative process and who wrote a critical response to the piece, notices the following:

> So fragile is this thing we call the real, this dance of the soul, this summoning of the past, that it requires an author, an agent, a self. It requires someone who knows where to place her feet, how to edit harmonies, how to hide words within the set, and how to unveil them later. For all her desire to submit to the past, Chloé is the agent of a careful present, too. (Paterson 2018)

and performance-making is due to be published with Intellect in 2018 (Chloé Déchery (Ed.), *Performing Collaboration in Solo Performance: A Duet Without You and Practice-As-Research*, Bristol, Intellect, Playtext collection, 2018).

[5] See Roland Barthes' essay, The Death of the Author. In Richard Howard (Trans.), *New Critical Essays,* Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2009.

So, although I was the initiator and, to borrow an expression ubiquitous in the realm of managerial practices, the 'project leader' investigating this artistic endeavour, I was prone to open up to collaborations that could potentially radically alter and shift my initial conceit. After an early research period initiated in early 2012,[6] I then invited Pedro Inês, Simone Kenyon and Deborah Pearson to work and collaborate with me, in a shared space, over ten days. Prior to this first gathering, it was agreed that the three artists would leave the rehearsal space after ten days and go back to their own projects and professional commitments in their respective cities. It was agreed that I would 'send them away' so that, together, we would be able to explore and experience their absence from the rehearsal studio, in real time, to find out how we could conceive and create diverse performative strategies or 'apparatus'[7] to stage and convey the notion of a multiple body being carried out and performed by a sole body within the fabric of the solo performance. The introductory text of the performance score lists the unfolding meanings lying behind this act of mutually agreed separation, which was the main condition of possibility for the collaborative project to take place.

> I had to send them away because it was cheaper this way. It was an economically-motivated choice.
> I had to send them away because the first time around, we didn't get our funding; we had to change our plans.
> I had to…because I had to consider extra childcare costs over artistic fee. It was about preserving the status quo in my marriage.
> I let them go because…we all lead nomadic lifestyles; we're rarely in the same place for very long. It was about work/life balance.
> We were having issues with visas. You see, one of us is not even European. If it were not for the Foreign policy from this country, we'd all be together tonight.

[6] During this early research and development phase, I worked with Deborah Pearson and Simone Kenyon as well as London-based, Belgian dancer, Bert Roman.

[7] By 'apparatus', I refer to the theoretical essay by Giorgo Agamben reflecting back on Foucault's thought on 'apparatus' (*dispositif*), in which Agamben summarises the 'apparatus' as 'a heterogeneous set', a 'network' established between all elements, doted with a 'concrete strategic function', and which is 'always being located in a power relation'. This definition that extends to all social relations as well as the political realm could very well be applied to any aesthetic's 'apparatus' set within or as part of a performance. G. Agamben. *What is Apparatus?* (David Kishik & Stefan Pedatella, Trans.), Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 2–3.

> They are not here tonight with us because they had other commitments. Artistic projects with a longer time spam and guaranteed Equity minimum. Better pay conditions.
> They were homesick; we are all home birds at heart, especially Pedro.
> They are not here with us tonight, because…
> I told them: 'it's not you, it's me'.
> And they agreed it was me.
> An affair was on the cards and we wanted to avoid unnecessary drama.
> There was too much of an edge between us.
> The atmosphere became so dense that you could cut it with a knife.
> We had to draw a line.
> At some point, shit really hit the fan. Big time.
> We had artistic disagreements.
> I fired them.
> They quit. I can't remember.
> I sent them away because I wanted to understand what our relationships were made of.
> I sent them away because I wanted to understand if our friendships would resist the test of time.
> I sent them away because I wanted to see how we could carry on, how we could be together, again.
>
> (Déchery et al. 2015)

At the heart of the performance project *A Duet Without You* (2015) lies the desire to investigate an 'aesthetics of absence'[8]; questioning the problematic relationship between live performance and bodily presence. As Peggy Phelan states, the body in performance can only put forward its own lack of being: '[…] performance uses the body to frame the lack of Being promised by and through the body – that which cannot appear

[8] By using the term 'aesthetics of absence', I do not refer to the works of Heiner Goebbels whose recent publication, *Aesthetics of Absence: Texts on Theatre*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015, offers a take on his performance work, but I mostly refer to the contemporary set of preoccupations, in art history as well as in performance studies or memory studies, with spectrality and the figures of absence and their paradoxical presence that seem to characterize a certain type of production in contemporary art and performance, from Bruce Nauman conjuring the solitude of the art studio in *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around a Perimeter of a Square* (1967) to Jérôme Bel's *Le dernier spectacle, une conference* (2004) which seeks out to understand and expose the failure of his previous performance *Le dernier spectacle* (1998), which the audience will never see, or to Deborah Pearsons's *Like You Were Before* (2010, 2015) weaving in Derrida's consideration of the recorded subject as a ghost with live footage of the performer as a child.

without a supplement…performance marks the body itself as loss…' (Phelan 1993, pp. 151–152). Although this claim over the supposed equivalence between performance and an ontology of absence has been since then widely disputed by various academics and cultural theorists,[9] I was nevertheless interested in investigating the relationship between performance and disappearance while approaching the solo form as a potential duet *in absentia*. Moreover, I thought that directing our attention towards the production of sociality and investing in the liminal social, affective and creative spaces between 'you' and 'I', while being alternatively together and apart, could harvest the transformative role of art as a form of sociality in and for itself. For this, I was inspired by Bojana Kunst for whom the rise in the production of sociality in art over the last two decades stands as a reaction against

> the production or…exploitation of sociality and human relationships for the generation of market value which profoundly shatters the public space as a space of antagonistic thinking or a space of the distribution of the sensual.[10] (Kunst 2015, p. 52)

Karen Christopher, a performance-maker and co-founding member of American collective, Goat Island, who worked as a mentor on the project, concisely summarises the core dramaturgical principle of *A Duet Without You* (2015):

> In order for them to be absent they have to have been there. Chloé solves one problem of the solo (the problem of working alone, and the attendant flatness, loneliness, loss of objectivity) with two stones: 1. bring others into the process, 2. use their absence by sending them away (without erasing them). And the form of this becomes content. (Christopher 2018)

While they would not be performing the piece live and would be sent away after a ten day-long rehearsal period, the three artistic collaborators were invited to contribute remotely to the second phase of the creative

[9] See, for instance, Rebecca Schneider. *Performance Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Re-enactment*, London and New York, Routledge, 2011; or Claire Bishop, Silvija Jestrovic, Nicholas Ridout, and Silvia Tramontana (Co-Ed.), *Double Agent*, London, Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2009.

[10] The division of the sensual is discussed by Jacques Rancière in his book, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, London and New York, Continuum, 2010.

process which was dedicated to dramaturgical editing and rehearsing. This phase was developed in collaboration with dramaturg, Michael Pinchbeck, between January and April 2015. The three main artistic collaborators were able to inflect and shift the writing and final editing of the piece through the means of audio-recorded texts which I compiled and edited together in collaboration with composer and sound designer, Tom Parkinson, and played back as part of the final performance. These snippets of audio-recorded texts operate in two ways: they stand as a series of performance directives for the performer to act upon while they also underwrite and contradict the script and the instructions carried out by the performer. The idea for this was that the audio-recorded texts would operate both as guiding principles and as conflicting impulses or stimuli so as to defuse the authority of the sole performer present on stage. The proximity and juxtaposition of different textural media on stage (a moving body, daily objects, pre-recorded speeches, recorded music) would help support the creation of a 'competing co-presence' between the live presence of the performer and the mediated absences of the collaborators (Fig. 11.1).

Fig. 11.1 Chloé Déchery in *A Duet Without You* (2015)

While plotting and writing the final performance score together, we wanted to engage with the varieties of an aesthetics of absence. Firstly, we wanted to re-enact some key moments of the creative process (a duet danced in the semi-darkness; a quartet sung *a capella*) in order to stage and convey the liveness and sharp edges of these initial encounters. We did not want to adopt an elegiac approach and mourn what might have been lost—our time spent together, the seeds of burgeoning friendships—but we wanted to try and abolish—or, at least, reduce and destabilise—the distance between past and present, between our early collaborative acts of creative exchange and the performance event. Secondly, we wanted to use the space and time of the live performance as coordinates to help us conjure the absence of the collaborators and summon them back on stage, despite physical distance and geographical dislocation. For instance, at the beginning of the performance, the absent collaborators address the performer through audio pre-recorded messages, projecting themselves into the temporality of the live performance while tacitly acknowledging the presence of the live audience. Early in the show, Pedro instructs me: 'I trust you to make people see past […] Let them see me […] Make sure they feel how positive and motivating I was in this process. Let them know how I enjoyed and celebrated everyone's ideas and took them to the next level' (Déchery et al. 2015). Finally, we also wanted to pay attention to and celebrate the ways through which memory (how we view and represent ourselves; how others perceive us and how we perceive others; how we experience a singular event through different perspectives) can be constructed, performed, undone and challenged through the competition of multiple voices, constantly re-writing the dialogue taking place between the artists—and, sometimes, with the complicity of the live audience. Thus, there is a moment in the show when I ask a few audience members to 'stand in' for my absent collaborators to help me tell the story of the love encounter between Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar:

> 'Actually, I was wondering if you could maybe help me?
> Would you mind stepping in, for me?
> Would you mind saying a few lines, for me? I will give you cards with the lines written on them.
> […]
> Actually, this is when I realize I am going to need an extra in the story…A fourth participant. It's a silent role this time, but crucial to the development of the plot. It's for the role of the "garcon de café"'.
> (Déchery et al. 2015)

The 'stepping in' from audience members to replace the absent collaborators is explained in the show. While refusing to follow my instructions within the time of devising, the performers invented other versions of the story. Following different fanciful, erotic or macabre modulations over the original historic love encounter, Deborah Pearson proposed to apologise to me for the trio's unwillingness to contribute to the performance material. An audio-recorded snippet extracted from this moment in the rehearsal space is played back within the performance, thus re-enacting the power dynamics of the rehearsal room into the space of the performance event. After gently coercing a few audience members into participation, I acknowledge and mock the impossibility for my fellow collaborators to tell the story *adequately* and pretend to reclaim ownership and authorial control over the creative material:

> This is not how it ended. You see I was born to tell that story.
> For a start, I was born in Paris.
> I know how it is to cross the Seine and find yourself in between the two banks.
> I know how it is to walk down the streets, past the terraces, and to let yourself be watched.
> I know how it is to sit by yourself at an empty table in a crowded café.
> I know how it is to whisper in the night in the middle of winter.
> I know all this.
> And they don't.
> I know these stories, they are my stories.
>
> (Déchery et al. 2015)

This initial configuration, the 'sending away' of the three collaborators, meant that these co-artists were working, from the start, towards the future of a performance from which they would be removed and that, very likely, they would be incapable of witnessing. Therefore, the collaborators knew that their presence at the time of the recording would translate into the present of a future live performance. From this ensued two guiding principles. Firstly, the performance would partly *document* our encounter and the time spent together. Secondly, I, as the sole performer present on stage, would represent and *stand-in* for the absentees.

In the first series of audio recordings, Pedro Inês starts his introduction by saying: 'I'd like you to represent me well' (Déchery et al. 2015). Deborah Pearson, later on, states: 'I'm also interested in the fact that

you are standing in for me' (Déchery et al. 2015) and Simone Kenyon confidently says 'I trust you completely, Chloé, to represent me as the powerhouse that I am' (Déchery et al. 2015). The contractual agreement according to which I would be present on stage, whereas the three other collaborators to the show would be absent from the theatre, is made explicit in the show through the means of authorised delegation as voiced by the three absent collaborators.

But, of course, if I/the performer speak/s *on behalf of* others, I am also spoken *by* and *through* them; if I sometimes objectify the collaborators-as-others, if I edit, reduce, commodify or instrumentalise their speeches within an edited audio collage embedded within the performance, I can gladly and willingly be, in return, reduced and objectified by and through their discourses. In the later phases of the dramaturgy and rewriting of the performance, I asked the collaborators to try and present themselves in a way that would be as exact and accurate as possible in less than three minutes. On 2 May 2015, I emailed the three collaborators the following instructions:

> The three collaborators introduce themselves; not so much their personal autobiographical selves (although they do try and briefly describe themselves physically), but mostly their contributions to the project, the great ideas they gave away, while also briefly outlining how the project started and was set up.
>
> They also ask 'you, Chloé' to represent and stand in for them as honestly and accurately as possible; they tell Chloé they'd like her to be fair to the process (which was truly, genuinely collaborative, except when…).[11]

Deborah Pearson, in her first statement, ends up describing myself as someone with a 'very casual, almost scruffy, elegance', and, in doing so, skillfully manages to reduce identity politics to a matter of dressing style (Déchery et al. 2015). On those occasions, contemporary performance can be a privileged site to investigate and enact what Amelia Jones calls the:

> dispersed, multiplied, specific subjectivities of the late capitalist, postcolonial, postmodern era: subjectivities that are acknowledged to exist always

[11] Déchery, Chloé, private email sent to Pedro Inês, Simone Kenyon and Deborah Pearson on the 5 May 2015, unpublished.

> already in relation to the world of other objects and subjects: subjectivities that are always already intersubjective as well as interobjective. (Jones 1997, pp. 11–18)

At the same time, the act of *re*-presenting someone else is challenged and made more difficult through the layering of the different collaborators' testimonies. Deborah describes herself as 'tall and Canadian'; Pedro might have or might not have an 'ugly Russian accent', and Simone describes herself as someone apparently blessed with 'a lithe physique, chiselled jaw and sharp attention' (Déchery et al. 2015). These are only some of the physical features that have to be represented through my own 'very casual, almost scruffy, elegance' (Déchery et al. 2015).

The feasibility of re-presenting others is further questioned by the absent collaborators. Deborah hints at the impossibility of the task when she says: 'You are somehow trying to represent my entire personality, or at least, my contribution to this project'. Pedro toys with images of monstrosity (what is 'beyond the norm') through the use of both analogy and synesthesia: 'Let them see me as tall as Deborah sounds like' (Déchery et al. 2015). Later on, Deborah playfully highlights my own limitations as a French actor with non-existent vocal training: 'You don't have to do the accent, don't worry about that. You just speak as yourself, that's fine'… to conclude: 'You can't, you can't pretend to really be us – even if you were…' (Déchery et al. 2015). The complexity of the act of representation required by the initial conceit of the piece—making the absence of others visible by standing in for them—is made perfectly explicit when Deborah states: 'I always try and dress like I'm French…so if you just dress like yourself, then that would be me enough' (Déchery et al. 2015).

Here, the dynamic of the mediation that is stated at the beginning of the show is turned upside down. With this statement, it is now *through* Deborah being a Francophile that the spectator can perceive and think of my French-ness. Elsewhere, the possible reciprocity of mediation is revealed as a paradox when Pedro advises me to '[p]retend that you are inside Simone's body' (Déchery et al. 2015). To be able to fully honour Simone's absence and to re-present her bodily being, I would have to stand; not *in*, but *from within* her body. With this image of a woman pregnant with another woman, the mediator is being neatly re-absorbed by the mediated. Through these dialectics of mediation, there is an attempt to both *create* and *undo* memory. But, rather than

mimicking the one that is absent, the emphasis is placed upon the mere attempt at staging absence, thus highlighting the 'effort to remember what is lost' (Phelan 1993, p. 147). If I mediate the others while being mediated by them; it is also testament to the fact that memory itself might only be accessed indirectly, through a 'mediated mediation'; partial acts of recovery and retrieval, misconstructions and bended perspectives. Furthermore, the more we hear from and about the others within the show, the less we seem to grasp anything certain about them. As Phelan states, 'The description reminds us how loss acquires meaning and generates recovery – not only of and for the object, but for the one who remembers' (Phelan 1993, p. 147).

The collaborators' aggrandising stories about themselves, the white lies, the made-up anecdotes work as many disguises and invite both the performer and the spectators to gauge and measure up the distance that remains in-between them. As the performance unfolds, the spectators are increasingly exposed to the sharing of dubious (possibly false) memories which emerge from divergent narratives and which, from the moment they are uttered in public, within the shared 'here and now' of the performance, spill into the real as something that might have happened and which might happen again.

At the very beginning of the show, Pedro mentions the sleeping arrangement I had organised for his stay during the residency and says: 'thank you for your couch'—and, whether this is true or not, the spectators can start imagining the couch itself (Déchery et al. 2015). Where was the couch located in the flat? Was it made of leather or fabric? Was it a sofa-bed? How comfortable was it? The flippant mention of this domestic arrangement spills, from the realm of artistic collaboration and sociality, into the realm of daily life, and invites the spectators to imagine the bodily imprint left by Pedro's body on this couch over the course of ten days. The word 'couch', when uttered, opens up a world of diverse signifiers. Once spoken and shared in the public space of the performance event, it is difficult, if not impossible, to pretend that such a word has never been uttered. In that sense, language in performance always seems to articulate and tighten our relation to temporality while pointing towards self-realisation, thus highlighting the magic power of summoning with which language is dotted.

Paradoxically, through the semi-fictitious creation and sharing of memories, it is memory itself that is being eroded. The more memories are recalled and recounted, the more the call to memory becomes

hollowed out and the act of remembrance appears confused and contradictory. Memory becomes a curious site for power struggles and competing inter-subjectivities. *A Duet Without You* is thus very much concerned with what Martin Hargreaves describes as a 'deconstructive spectrality' where 'ghosts of various kinds, in various shapes and at various times' populate and share the stage together (Hargreaves 2004, 148). At the end of the performance, the audience is left with a multitude of several near-parallel, semi-biographical narratives and non-corroborated versions of the same event or many 'ghosts of various kinds'. Mary Paterson does acknowledge that subjective discourses can altogether undermine the commonality of the shared experience and destabilise the seeming harmony of the creative sociality. She writes that,

> The absent performers know we are here. Their past is our present, and they shape it, lightly, bluntly, as if they are dipping their fingers into a cup of hot, milky foam. But their words are thick with lies. They contradict each other. Make things up. Edit the ends of each other's sentences. They joke and play, as if this was a laughing matter – this fragile reality, this conjuring of company, this question of love. (Paterson 2018)

Somehow, the making and unmaking of memory is possibly made more tangible through the physical 'duet-like' actions carried out by the performer onstage, such as dancing with an invisible partner; laughing to a joke that remains unheard; slicing a potato into equally sized portions or pouring champagne into two flutes. Those 'task-like'[12] activities act like regular markers within the temporality of the live performance and anchor the exchanges between the absent collaborators and the performer on stage (travelling back-and-forth between a past revisited from the present and a future imagined from the past) within the coordinates of live performance. There is a paced energy, a regularity, a tediousness even, attached to those actions that inscribe them with a series of repeated gestures and behaviours that expand beyond the temporality of the performance event. The potato was sliced and will be sliced again. Glasses are raised and will be raised again. Hands, coated in blue paint,

[12]The qualifier 'task-like' is borrowed from Anna Halprin who, amongst other figures of American postmodern dance (Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, David Gordon, and Deborah Hay), designed tasks-like choreographies based on scores, daily gestures and structured improvisations.

were imposed on the wall. Hands keep being pressed against the wall, calling out to be seen.

> The contour of these hands – posing wide open on the rock – coated in colour. Most often they were blue, black.
> These hands a blue of water a black of sky
> […]
> Flat
> Posing severed on the grey granite
> So that someone would see them.
>
> (Duras 2018)

The simplicity of these actions' execution as well as their ordinary quality make them part of a long chain of human gestures and actions, easily reproduced, easily shared and taken over, transformed and passed on. Gestures and deeds travel from one body to the next or within the same body as a continual site of 'becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Through regular patterns of actions and sheer repetition, the acts carried out on stage evoke a performativity, a series of gestures that keep self-generating and which extend beyond the present, into the future. Furthering this thought, Mary Paterson describes the physicality in *A Duet Without You* as:

> [a] choreography of absence, until Chloé's body is taken over by the momentum of memory. Chloé does not lead the movement but follows it. She responds to a weightless arm, an unseen touch. Her body falls into the echo of a movement like a faltering recollection, or a memory struggling to be told. (Paterson 2018)

In *A Duet Without You*, facts and events from the past are dutifully covered and shadowed by contradictory narratives in a logic that could be seen as the opposite of an archaeological procedure. The different fragmented narratives that we hear throughout the performance; stories about the collaborators and myself; stories about performance-making weaved in with the history of the modernist art scene in 1920s Paris; anecdotes about friendship and love, end up collapsing and merging so as to blur the very notions of memory and history. As half-finished narratives and other red herrings proliferate, it becomes increasingly difficult for the spectator within the performance, to grasp what might or might

not have happened. While the trustworthiness of memory is being challenged, the accessibility of history—the possible hold onto the past—is equally brought into question. Thus, the narrative surrounding the origins of the project is fraught from the start as the reasons for the collaborators being away are both explicitly broached and frustratingly inconclusive. At the beginning of the performance, while I advance different motifs for the collaborators' absence: 'It was cheaper this way […] It was about work/life balance. […] We were having issues with visas', the figure of the live performer as a mediator or reliable representative is instantly turned into an unreliable source, an untrustworthy character (Déchery et al. 2015).

Later on in the piece, the notion of divergent or counter-narratives is exemplified by the disagreement the collaborators share over the way we should have been telling the story of the first encounter between Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar in a Parisian café. As described earlier, at the time of the devising process, the three collaborators dwelt on pornographic versions of the story. In one of the audio recordings played in the performance, one can hear Deborah Pearson embracing the fact that her version entails historical inaccuracies:

> I want to add a sordid detail, even though this is not my part of the story. And I don't have any fact for this, other than conjecture, but isn't it possible that he might have used that glove or this glove and put them on that night […] to masturbate? (Déchery et al. 2015)

From the start, it is made explicit that ten days were going to be distilled, distorted into an hour-long solo performance which would require editing, filtering and leaving things out. Pedro acknowledges this in his very first audio-recording: 'Ten days would never be enough and we all knew it…and that made every minute count double, triple even' (Déchery et al. 2015). Michael Pinchbeck wrote the following:

> Karen Christopher, working with Chloé as a mentor on *A Duet Without You*, once said of her work with Goat Island: 'We are standing here with time and the time it takes to stand here.' Now Chloé is standing here with the time she spent with others. (…) Two weeks will be distilled into an hour and four people will become one. In that time, all she will have left is the space and what is already in it. (Pinchbeck 2015)

A Duet Without You is then, both an attempt conducted in real time to recapture glimpses of past events, and the considerate condensation of

a sequence of interactions subsequently and retrospectively turned into a live event. *A Duet Without You* invests in the proximity of the past and harnesses the immediacy and potency of memories conveyed and shared within live performance. But, at the same time, it acknowledges the distance that remains between now and then, between here and over there—a distance akin to the distance between the two islands at the heart of Paris on the River Seine; to the distance between two cafés facing each other in a narrow street, to the distance between you, the reader, and me, the writer.

At one point in *A Duet Without You*, I/the performer state/s: 'We are very close but do not touch each other' (Déchery et al. 2015), which can be read as a variation of 'Séparés, on est ensemble', a line by another French poet, Stéphane Mallarmé, in *The White Water Lily*.[13] Ultimately, the present of *A Duet Without You* can also be read as a call to the future, a time when we might remember this performance as a memory, a haunting from the past.

To conclude, I will use words that are not mine and will resort to, yet again, another act of ventriloquism.

> There will come a time when this is a memory, too – this room, this taste of champagne, this imaginary view from this fragile window, this movement between past and present, reality and fiction, possession and desire. There will come a time when the stage will lie empty and there will be nothing to see but a line of chalk. A mark made any time in the last thirty-thousand years. The same mark, made in the same way, with a unique meaning. An invitation to dance. (Paterson 2018)

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[13] Jacques Rancière translates this quote with 'Apart, we are together' in 'Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art'. In *Art & Research, Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods, 2*(1, Summer), 2008.

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CHAPTER 12

Trace: Shame and the Art of Mourning

Louie Jenkins

Introduction

What does it mean to stage mourning and generate performative memorialisation? Lisa A. Costello defines performative memorialisation as, 'a layered memorial activity that […] create(s) a temporally fluid, Bakhitinian dialogic between the author and the subject (memory) and the event and the audience (history)' (Costello 2006, p. 22). The dynamic between the audience and text is interpreted as active rather than passive, engaging rather than absorbing, citational and subjective rather than static. I have chosen to apply the concept of performative memorialisation to the writing and performance of autobiographical mourning narratives. My contention is that the dialogic between author (witness), subject (death) and audience is problematised by shame-affect and that the agency inherent in this work is the personal and universal aspect of the material; we all lose people and we all die.

In the UK, autobiographical performances of mourning narratives are an emerging area of practice. Bobby Baker's *Box Story* (2001) reflects on (amongst other things) her father's death through drowning;

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Kirsten Fredrikson developed *Everything Must Go* (2009), which won a Total Theatre Award at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and recently Jo Bannon (in collaboration with Lucy Cassidy) produced the one-on-one performance/installation *Dead Line* (2014). The profile of these recent works, along with Ellie Harrison's *Etiquette of Grief* (2013), and Michael Pinchbeck's poignant, one-on-one performance *The Long Winding Road* (2004–2009), presents a developing engagement with the performance of witness and mourning.

However, I argue, that the subjects of death and grief are shrouded in cultural constructs that impact the writing, performance and reception of mourning narratives, which is why autobiographical explorations of the experience of loss is limited. This contention raises some interesting question with regard to the authoring, and performance of autobiographical mourning narratives: if our experience of dying, death and mourning are socially constructed, how does shame-affect, triggered by cultural injunctions, complicate the processes of autobiographical performance making? Secondly, how might the shame/identity index be subverted through autobiographical performance?

Time Piece (2012–2014), is a solo, autobiographical performance of mourning narratives developed as part of the practice-as-research enquiry *Shame and its Positive: Mourning, Class and Queer Performativity* (2015). It is a 50-minute performance composed of interlinked monologues exploring the deaths of my parents (Mum—20 February 1983—and Dad—25 November 1983), and partner, Rebecca (13 April 2005). Significantly, *Time Piece* seeks to investigate the articulation and performance of mourning narratives by experimenting with structure and writing approaches, exploring how the material validates social sanctions or challenges accepted codes of behaviour.

The autobiographical content of *Time Piece* is purposely confusing as I weave fictitious, often humorous monologues and real narratives within the theatrical space; the themes, content and articulation of self(ves) and self as witness, are confused. I present my middle-class, queer self and proudly reflect on my Yorkshire working-class childhood, my experience of losing my parents as an adolescent, my love for Virginia Woolf's writing and the traumatic experience of watching your partner die of a terminal illness. The structure of *Time Piece* is punctuated by humour to offer the audience and myself moments of relief, moments of anchoring and reprieve from the narratives and experience that are either confusing, that resonate or are beyond comprehension. I did not use humour to deflect from the gravity of the experiences, but rather as a means of

relaxing into the telling through a performance register that coaxed the audience to engage with the difficult subject matter.

> My mother's jaw came loose,
> Often in front of the telly,
> Morecambe and Wise were treacherous
> We'd find it under a chair or stuffed behind a cushion laughing
> My father dexterously fishing it out
> Casting for it from his armchair
> Reeling it in
> Re-attaching it
> Fishing for love.
>
> (Jenkins 2014)

As the audience walk into the theatre space it is stripped of theatrical regalia: black curtains are removed revealing walls and ladders, exit signs become prominent and the occasional botched paint job is made visible. The set lacks initial signification: a hanging rope, a tin bath, a chair, a suitcase and a misplaced microphone provide a skeletal frame to the work, allowing the audience to invest whatever meanings they choose. It is rather a disappointing attempt at staging, low-brow, and apparently unimaginative.

I am in 'costume,' bare-footed wearing a soaking wet black slip. When the last person enters I thank the stage manager and ask the technicians if they are ready, give the 'thumbs up' and nothing changes, no lights are brought down, the audience remain lit, I simply climb on a chair and *Time Piece* begins.

Exposure

> You've taken your seat and noted the unusual set; there's a rope, a suitcase, a chair and a woman lying face down in a tin bath centre stage. [*Beat*] She wears a black slip she bought from Marks and Spencer's in Chichester – for £22.50. It is a sombre scene. [*Beat*] The lights are focused solely on the bath - on the body. Evocative music plays, [*Beat*] it has a beat. [*Beat*] Suddenly the woman looks up. She drips. [Beat] She finds you in the audience and stares. She's not especially happy. [*Beat*] You know why… (Jenkins 2014)

From the outset the audience is asked to play witness to my witnessing and, in doing so, to reflect upon that very process. The physical space

they enter offers no protection from my address, as we are visible to each other as I pointedly direct my speech to individuals, which, in the context of autobiographical performance is a recognised method of presentation, but in relation to shame theory presents the opportunity to exploit the device.

Shame-Affect

> Whenever we are said to be *motivated*, it is because an affect has made us so, and we are motivated in the direction and form characteristic of that affect. Whatever is important to us is made so by affect. Affect is the engine that drives us. (Nathanson 1992, p. 59—italics in original)

According to psychologist, Silvan Tomkins (1911–1991), to whom Affect Theory is credited, there are nine recognised, universal affects that are identifiable during the first year of life: enjoyment, excitement, surprise, anger, disgust, dissmell (disgust expressed through the nose), distress, fear and shame. Affect theory relates to the study of human motivation: why individuals choose to do certain things, how 'choices' are triggered and how affects amplify the highly specific activity set in motion. The affect system is said to provide 'the primary blueprints for cognition, decision and action' positing that 'humans are responsive to whatever circumstances activate the varieties of positive and negative affects' (Tomkins 1984, p. 139). Tomkins introduces the concept of affects as complex, psycho-physiological structures with psychologist, Donald Nathanson, developing the theory, conceiving that affects are both pre- and post-cognitive, innate, 'pre-programmed, genetically transmitted mechanisms that exist in each of us' (Nathanson 1992, p. 58).

Affects are understood to have an adaptive social function preparing an individual for the suitable response to his or her external environment. The stimulus-affect-response sequence is especially potent in relation to shame-affect, which 'protects an organism from its growing avidity for positive affect' (Nathanson 1992, p. 140). Children learn about human interaction and social mores through relations with others. For example, when a child's interest in another's appearance exceeds the bounds of socially sanctioned propriety then the visual (face-to-face) or spoken negative/angry interaction triggers shame-affect through the

sequence interest-rejection-impediment-shame (Broucek 1991, p. 22). The child's interest is interrupted, eyes averted, thereby 'protecting' the child from the potential from another's anger. Thus shame-affect is an innate and learned physiological mechanism—presenting as a literal turning away from what is otherwise attractive and desirable (Ostrofsky 2003, p. 10). As such, shame-affect establishes and reinforces embodied and socially sanctioned limitations. In order to avoid personal and societal rejection an individual, when faced with an exciting or desirable situation, will draw on historical scripts of embodied shaming to navigate the present situation through the capacity of affective resonance, assessing the 'risks' inherent in potential interaction. I use the terms 'risk' in reference to social relations, as well as culturally configured rules and societal norms and 'affective resonance' in reference to systems of human interaction.

Shame-affects evolve through time. Individuals experience and acquire collections of memory scripts formed through previous exposure to affects, which work to shape and guide present perceptions. Scripts, or 'ways of living in the world' (Nathanson 1992, p. 4), develop when body and affect, memory and mind, cognition and will, and social context, all intersect. Queer and cultural theorist, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, contends that an individual has a lifelong relationship with the shame/identity index. The shame/identity index refers to the interconnectivity between shame and identity. Sedgwick (after Tomkins) suggests that the moment the shame-affect is triggered through interruption of identification then shame, too, 'makes' identity (Sedgwick 2003, p. 36). The proposition is that shame-affect is defining of an individual's identity as:

> one's personality or character is a record of the highly individual histories by which the fleeting emotion shame has instituted far more durable, structural changes in one's relational and interpretive strategies towards both self and others. (Sedgwick 2003, p. 59)

In developing autobiographical performance and exploring the identity/shame index there is a subtle shift between focusing purely on external factors (hegemonic cultural value systems) as determining of subjection, to focusing on the psychosomatic process of embodiment through shame-affect. Shame-affect is a significant factor in the (re)presentation of self in autobiographical performance. Not only do I present and

perform 'self' through the shame/identity index, the act of authoring (my)self is subject to shame signification within the constricting bounds of social discourse and the field of autobiographical performance. It could be argued that without engaging with the shame/identity index and the sites of shaming then autobiographical writing and performance responds to identity formation through the lens of social determinism. Social determinism would suggest that identity formation is a fixed system rather than a generative and transformative one. Understanding that the social, cultural and biological are interactive mediums of identity formation positions the individual as possessing 'a degree of control over their future, rather than as raw material responding rather passively to cognitive or learned phenomena' (Hemmings 2005, p. 562).

Tomkins defines culturally reinforced sites of shaming as ideo-affective postures. He suggests that ideo-affective postures are the result of systematic differences in the socialisation of affects (Tomkins 1984, p. 183). An individual in one culture will respond to a trigger in accordance with his/her ideo-affective posture—for example, in one culture a distressed crying child may be comforted, whilst in another the child may be berated: 'Boys don't cry!'. Familial and cultural interactions enforce relational injunctions through the system of affects. Tomkins argues that for the child, these potent interactions become internalised leading to the child inheriting and developing a subjective ideology stance of his or her own based on familial relationships and ideological positioning (Tomkins 1995, p. 147). For Tomkins, ideological systems instill normative positions of socialisation. As such, ideo-affective postures are the consequence of 'norm compliance'; my relationship to my parents' and partner's illnesses and deaths was formed within familial, regional and cultural rituals, politics and beliefs—generating an ideo-affective posture in relation to mourning.

Mourning Shame

Focus

My father had shrunk
To the size of a peanut
Lost inside his suit
Dignified in his failing

Always

At fifty-two he was dying.
Not Drowning.
Not Waving.
Not Cobbling.
Dying.
And we had no money.

She. Her. That woman behind the Plexi-glass grill stared. Looked him up-and-down.
Sickly-Ill-fitting-suit-man
Sunken-cheeks-man
Tear-blue-eyes-man

Cough.

"No. Sorry. Erm (check notes) Mr. Jenkins. You. Are. Not. Entitled."
He. Him. That man. My dad. He. Him. That man. Worked all his life. Was,
"Not. Entitled."

Sigh.

He slowly took pen. Took paper. Avoiding her eye. He shakily wrote. One. Word.
"PRIDE."
Folding the corners one-by-one.
Slipped it through her grill.
"Here, love," he said, now holding her stare, "it's all I've got."

(Jenkins 2014)

According to Tomkins, shame-affect is triggered in response to the affects 'interest-excitement' or 'enjoyment-joy' affects. This raises the question: how do positive affects relate to mourning shame if, according to psychologist, Donald Nathanson, grief is said to primarily be associated with the negative affects distress-anguish (Nathanson 1992, p. 98)? Firstly, it is important to establish that for Tomkins the positive affects of enjoyment-joy are associated with a return to the state of contentment (relief from distress) rather than the state of happiness (Nathanson 1992, p. 79). This is significant because grief disenfranchises the bereaved, disrupting social relatedness and any sense of equilibrium and contentment. Grief is understood as the result of disrupted attachments not simply with those that have died, but with family, friendships, love and

community; 'it ruptures social narratives, belief systems and the sense of self that is formed and sustained in relation to others' (Herman 2001, p. 51). The disruption of interconnectedness is significant for the bereaved because 'to be a social outcast in one's grief, is to experience one's grief and thereby oneself, to be shameful' (Kauffman 2010, p. 11). Grief and associated expressions of sadness can be profoundly isolating for the bereaved. The bereaved may seek emotional relief from the pain of isolation by suppressing expressions of sadness in order to be reintegrated in to one's community. The desire for a return to the state of contentment is powerful when one experiences grief, this desire is often fuelled by the fear of rejection.

The spectre of rejection is interesting when considering making performance of mourning narratives because embodied shame has the potential to problematise the relationship with the audience impacting the writing, intention and performance of the material. When I first began to make performance around the subject of death and grief the work felt indulgent, as I was concerned the personal narratives would be distressing for the audience and I didn't want to be perceived as seeking sympathy. Through developing my understanding of how shame-affect works in relation to death and mourning, I began to confront my fear of rejection by a process of (dis)identification.

(Dis)Identification

Performance scholar and queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz's book *Disidentification: Queers of colour and the performance of politics* (1999) investigates the performances of queer-racialised bodies as agents of change through the contestation of dominant ideology. Muñoz's exploration into the performance of hybrid identities (non-white and queer) seeks to 'offer the minoritarian subject a space to situate itself and thus seize social agency' (Muñoz 1999, p. 1), through reconfiguring socially encoded scripts of identity, a process he defines as (dis)identification. The reason I find Muñoz's work of interest in relation to the writing and performance of *Time Piece* is that shame-affect is a potent reflection of dominant ideologies that are often toxic embodied dispositions. Consider Sedgwick's assertion that:

> the forms taken by shame are not distinct 'toxic' parts of a group or individual identity that can be excised; they are instead integral to and residual in the processes by which identity itself is formed. (Sedgwick 2003, p. 63)

If identity, in part, is formed and interpellated through ideological systems of subjection, then shame is a significant contributing factor in social formations, acceptance and control. Muñoz posits that (dis)identification presents an alternative approach to engaging with the theorising of subject formation. The "good subject", he argues (after Althusser 1971), identifies and assimilates discursive and ideological forms whilst the "bad subject" counter-identifies rejecting and resisting them. (Dis)identification, by contrast works on or against dominant ideology, transforming 'cultural logic from within' (Muñoz 1999, p. 11). The concept of working within the dominant ideology to explore interpellation, failed interpellation and embodied shame presents the opportunity to disrupt socially constructed narratives of self by discerning 'the ways in which subjectivity is formed in modern culture' (Muñoz 1999, p. 26). Muñoz maintains that 'disidentification is a strategy that resists a conception of power as being a fixed discourse' (Muñoz 1999, p. 19) and, as such (dis)identification works as a conscious practice that challenges identification from within ideological discourse with the aim of disrupting representation and identification. To practically apply (dis)identification to *Time Piece* demands breaking socially recognised representations of my subjective self.

Death's Witness

Transparency

We stood on the edge and I held her hand.
We stood on the edge and I stopped her from jumping.
We stood on the edge and I threw her over.
We stood on the edge and I watched her fall.
We stood on the edge and I pushed her away - avoided her advances.
Spat.
Fucked.
Cried.
Drowned.
We stood on the edge and the tide washed us away.
We stood on the edge and a car mounted the curb.
We stood on the edge and screamed against the wind.
We stood on the edge and I knew she would die.
We stood on the edge and stabbed each other.
We stood on the edge and ate cake.
She

Watches
Me

(Jenkins 2014)

Time Piece explores the very processes of writing, making visible the act of composition revealing moments of 'dialogue' between author/performer and audience. The authoring of *Time Piece* fostered a poetic writing style that positioned 'I' the author in the role of witness. *Time Piece*, as a solo, autobiographical performance, presents a series of formal and informal monologues, which engage with the notion of 'dialogue' as a temporal contract between author/performer and audience. The structure of *Time Piece* defines the sections in relation to photographic terms: *Exposure*, *Positive*, *Focus*, *Negative* and *Transparency*. The significance of the photographic terms relates to philosopher Roland Barthes book, *Camera Lucida* (1981), and defines my interest in the concept of punctum.

Photographs, according to Barthes, are potent referential surfaces that fix live (and dead) subjects in time. Punctum, as defined by Barthes, inspires intensely private meaning often escaping language signification, the Real that catches one emotionally off-guard as you gaze at what is both present and absent in the photograph. The act of seeing the signification beyond the unknown image arouses, according to Barthes, desire and emotion, in relation to the encounter of that, 'that-has-been' (Barthes 1981, p. 77). The photographs that potentiate punctum, in the view of some analysts, have to be, 'discrepant, incongruous, ill fitting, in order to deactivate that feature, which seems to be the very principle of photography: likeness' (Scott 1999, p. 236). Scott's argument is that familiar photographs have 'gathered truth' into themselves so that rather than being *aides-memoire* they have become the memory themselves and in order to prick 'experiential repossession' the viewer/narrator must happen upon and engage with unfamiliar images that they are, in some way, powerless against; powerless in the sense of not having defined the photograph with a personal connection/narrative.

Negative is and is not my mother's story and is inspired by our close familial bond, whilst *Transparency* relates to my experience of living with my partner Rebecca, who was deemed terminally ill for 18 months prior to her death. *Negative* works through metaphor, whereas *Transparency* searches for an authentic rendering of the experience and aims to be explicit, counter to accepted social mores. *Negative* is not the story of

my mother's life, but it is the story of her death, or rather, the death I have chosen to conceptualise for her (and me). The story begins in the small town of Garforth, where we lived during my childhood, a former mining village on the outskirts of Leeds, Yorkshire. However, it quickly transforms through magical realism into a flight of fancy where a pregnant teenager circumnavigates the world, gives birth in the sea, raises her daughter on mackerel and eventually settles with her child in a crumbling lighthouse. As a devisor struggling to 'write' my own mother I found the abstract frame offered a creative safe distance from which to thread fact through fiction. There are authentic references within a metaphorical narrative, most potently the reference to my mother's breast cancer.

> The story could end here, [*Pause*] but there's always Death. He waits by the rocks, he squats in the mine, he buys that extra round of drinks, he goads the fighters, favours the weak, - and he sits in the breasts of women, the breast of mothers; your mother and mine. (Jenkins 2014)

I created a fictive frame as a metaphorical buffer for the audience and significantly for myself. The intentional act of composition reflects, I argue, the need to keep the dead and the experience of grief at a socially sanctioned distance from the living. Physiologically we understand the biological facts of death: the heart stops pumping blood around the body, the brain dies and breathing ceases. Yet, by virtue of our consciousness and imaginations it is often difficult as individuals to accept that death is the end of a person's existence. Though if death were objectively interpreted by reason alone then culture's relationship to life and living would be drastically altered. However, as conscious beings, apparent mortality is continually defied, and myths, superstitions and rituals are firmly embraced. A metaphor is a cross-domain mapping where one domain (life and death) is conceptualised through another (a journey) (Lakoff 1993, p. 202). In *Negative*, the journey I present is, in essence, about mother/daughter love, their life together and the mother's stoic death. I found myself re-writing my mother's death, our final moments together in a conscious effort to re-fashion the narrative away from fear, anger and sorrow towards strength, courage and pride.

> When Death eventually called, the mother stood tall, and with politeness and pride she let him in. The daughter was there to catch her. She laid her

> on the kitchen table, closed her blue/green eyes and sewed her mother - memory by memory - into the sinew of her heart. The pyre she built sent sparks dancing in the night sky, and as the young woman tasted love's tears, she stood tall - thought of mothers, of waves. (Jenkins 2014)

The conceptualised death I devise for my mother and the response the daughter displays mirror the one mediated through the social expectations of British culture. Culturally, Western societies value 'productivity, stoicism, and control [and] death represents the shameful loss of all of these things' (Harris 2010, p. 77). To control one's feelings or desires at the point when one feels completely powerless and disenfranchised is perceived to be important in order to prevent abandonment of the social support system. An individual may be expected to hide her/his grief because, 'it interferes with the mandate to produce, perform, and function' (Harris 2010, p. 81), and failure to conform to expected norms of behaviour produces shame. Other cultures are more permissive of explicit expressions of grief, where crying and wailing are encouraged, expected and occasionally paid for. Yemenite-Jewish wailing, as an example, is a tradition of lamentation performed at a 'house of mourning' by older women in the community in order to ceremonially bring the mourners together in a shared moment of reflection (Gamliel 2010, p. 70). Fundamentally, one will experience grief through the social codes of one's culture, which are established and expressed through religious beliefs, funerary ritual and social values. The cultural expression of grief is therefore often different to the individual's psychosomatic experience of bereavement. The sanctioned expression of grief complicates and defines an individual's experience of grief, with the disjunction between feeling and expression (desire and expectation/rejection) producing shame.

In *Transparency*, I emphasise the presentation of the 'truth', which I relate to the desires and urges an individual experiences in the event of witnessing death but are sanctioned not to express. The suppression of such urges is embodied as shame as, 'experiencing and believing one's grief to be 'not normal' stigmatizes and isolates the mourner' (Kauffman 2010, p. 15). *Transparency* articulates the original urges and feelings in an attempt to authenticate and normalise the experience contrary to societal rules and expectations. *Transparency* focuses on the complex experience of watching my partner Rebecca dying, the ordinary day-to-day existence of shopping and decorating alongside the traumatic reality of living with someone terminally ill.

We stood on the edge and you haunted me.
We stood on the edge and you lied to me.
We stood on the edge and the truth silenced us.
We stood on the edge and laughed at nothing.
We stood on the edge and it hurt.
We stood on the edge and painted the living room.
We stood on the edge and you baked scones.
We stood on the edge and became a cliché.
We stood on the edge and wrote our love in the sand
We stood on the edge and the tide washed us away

(Jenkins 2014)

The notion of 'standing on the edge' refers to the sensation of dissociation where there is an engagement with and detachment from reality. In the performance, I stretch holding a rope suspended from a roof beam, my toes barely touching the floor as I take the full weight of my body through my arm. The painful and potent, theatrical device underscores the experience of living with someone who is defined as terminally ill, the feeling of standing on a cliff edge barely anchored to reality: it hurts, and it is frighteningly unstable.

In writing *Transparency*, I wanted to remain authentic to the experience of living with a terminally ill partner—I wanted the experience to be transparent to the audience. The moments of anger, hate, confusion and fear, alongside moments of joy and enlightenment provided a series of snapshots, random spoken images that demand interpretation. There is a narrative thread leading up to Rebecca's death and beyond, but the thread is ruptured by everyday-ness, moments that offer instances of resonance for the audience.

Lines such as: 'we stood on the edge and carried shopping.' 'We stood on the edge and drank cheap wine.' 'We stood on the edge and forgot batteries for the smoke alarm,' are threaded alongside more provocative and potent lines: 'We stood on the edge and I knew she would die.' 'We stood on the edge and administered the medicine.' 'We stood on the edge and I kissed your blue lips.' In creating *Transparency*, I wanted to open up the signification of the text such that the autobiographical narrative was marked by my personal story, but still open to interpretation and meaning. In playing with tenses, adopting a poetic repetitive structure, in referencing day-to-day life events and in being honest about the experience of loving someone as they die, I aimed to present a Barthesian punctive site of engagement.

Through the authoring of *Time Piece* I aimed to present a punctive site of plural significance where the audience were free to make meaning in the reflective spaces the scripting afforded. As such, the notion of 'witness' in *Time Piece* worked to expose grief as a cultural construct. Here, the signification of the author of the autobiographical mourning narratives expands the meaning of the narratives beyond the personal in order that a 'different kind of representational space where questions of essence, which are treated as fallacious within writing, where meaning is always plural and substitutive, can be raised' (Anderson 2001, p. 72). The concept of the plurality of meaning in relation to autobiographical performance is significant because an individual's story is culturally inscribed and, as such, offers a reflection upon broader social constructs that are defining of experience. *Time Piece* worked to present my personal experience of loss and mourning as subject to cultural sanctions, affording the audience the space to reflect upon their own experiences of loss and subjection.

As a performer, the presentation of *Transparency* was profound. The intertextual nature of *Transparency* (the visual and spoken articulation of the experience of living with someone who was terminally ill) was unpredictable; initially it was difficult to anticipate the audience's or my own reaction to the instance of performance. Over time, as the assurance of the piece evolved, the audience's appreciation of *Transparency* appeared to change too.

Performance theorist Erika Fischer-Lichte's concept of the autopoietic feedback loop (2008) suggests that 'the feedback loop is a self-referential autopoietic system enabling a fundamentally open, unpredictable process' (Fischer-Lichte 2008, p. 39). Significantly, performance theorist, Gareth White, suggests that the feedback loop produces itself autonomously, in distinction from the creative work of the performance makers who have set it in motion (White 2013, p. 162). As such, the emphasis of the feedback loop is on the transformative instance of performance through the reciprocal connection between the audience and performer. As the solo performer of *Time Piece*, in sharing personal mourning narratives, I experienced something truly transformational; I was seen and respected for my experience of loss rather than rejected because of it. I felt that my acceptance of the material meant that my relationship with the audience became validated. What I experienced when performing *Time Piece* was that the audience began to 'hold' me in the profound moments of sharing mourning narratives; literally they held my attention

not breaking eye contact, often moving forward in their seats as I shared my encounter with dying and death, with love and loss. As previously stated, when shame-affect is triggered there is a physical turning away with eyes averted through a bodily act of rejection. With *Time Piece*, there was a physical acceptance and recognition of the experience of loss, no one turned away. In holding eye contact we (audience and performer) were 'seen' for our shared appreciation for the subject of death and the experience of loss.

My understanding of shame and my acceptance of my experience of loss enabled and enlivened the autopoietic feedback loop. As such, I believe that an awareness of embodied shame opens the potential signification of autobiographical performance through a collective understanding of shame-affect; *my* story, is *a* story, is *our* story. It is difficult to ascertain how you measure punctive force, possibly the transformation was a moment of shared understanding, acceptance or appreciation of the 'honesty' of the narrative. Possibly it alleviated shame in relation to personal encounters with death. Possibly that is, in itself, a form of punctive force.

Shame demands we explore relational processes and attempt to understand how they become embodied and reinforced through political, cultural, familial, economic, racial, religious and personal interactions. To perform solo, autobiographical performance is to depend on relational processes between performer/audience: aim, interaction, communication, resonance, provocation, transformation and agency. The choice of content, the authoring and the staging of autobiographical performance involve a conscious process that positions the audience as spectators/participants, interpreters and meaning makers.

The necessity to relate to the projected audience has the potential to enliven the content, writing and performance of personal narratives; conversely, to be conscious of the audience may problematise the generation and performance of autobiographical narratives. Therefore, writers and performers of autobiographical work need to consider how embodied shame impacts their work, and how, if they choose, they might subvert it.

(Dis)identifying with shame demands exploring the point(s) of identity negation and formation by re-engaging with the embodied sites of shaming. The process of self-identification engages with the concept of (dis)identification, where, 'the discourses of essentialism and constructivism short-circuit' (Muñoz 1999, p. 6). As such (dis)identification emerges at a moment of resistance between fixed identity dispositions

and socially constructed narratives of self. Engaging with mourning shame is complex because the sense of loss and rejection can be so profound. However, the process of understanding, acknowledging and (dis) identifying with culturally acceptable expressions of grief will, potentially, impact the experience of loss.

Time Piece is my attempt at performative memorialisation, my search for the essence of my parents and my partner, Rebecca—it is an attempt that has empowered me to share my experience of loss and my relationship to dying, death and mourning. Ultimately, it has given me affirmation of my experience of loss and has enlivened what it means to be alive.

We stood on the edge and I placed some of you in a tin on the
bookshelf next to your photo.
We stood on the edge and I don't like being awake
We stood on the edge and you became sand
We stood on the edge and came full circle
You
Me.
Us.

(Jenkins 2014)

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CHAPTER 13

Performative Ritual of Loss—Marking the Intangible

Clare Parry-Jones

I saw my child's heartbeat once. I took home a photographic image of the early formation of her body. Days later, I experienced a miscarriage, hospital admission and subsequent infertility.

This experience propelled me into a state of loss and grieving, both for my child and the fact that I would never become a birth mother. I chose not to take medication for depression, but to surrender to this process and, when I felt ready, to embark upon an excavation of my internal state. I began this metaphysical, archaeological dig from a state of darkness. In time, what emerged was a necessity to create and to commemorate. To create artwork which could safely and positively hold my exploration of, and response to, this loss.

Initially, I collaborated with nature as my sole co-creator and witness, later documenting the process with my camera. My artistic practice combines performance, land art and photography. I work with water-strength paper to create life-sized bodies (human and part human/animal/plant), which I generally work with in water elements (sea, rivers, lakes, mist, ice). I also make paper costumes. My theatre practice has evolved to

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incorporate clown (direct interaction with audience and environment), ritual (a rite of passage) and core shamanic practice (a spiritual practice of dialogue with "non-ordinary reality").

During my enquiries into loss, I reflected upon the lives of my own birth mother and grandmother, both of whom had died many years before. I wanted to explore the concept of mother, both in ancestral and land terms (ancient beliefs of the earth as mother and goddess), to commemorate my maternal line, to try to find a connection and direction. To seek solace in the land as a nurturing mother and in turn, to mother our land. Within this research, I encountered the life of my maternal great aunt, who had worked on the archaeological site of Avebury in the 1930s. This led me to explore mesolithic and neolithic sites as sacred gathering places of celebration and commemoration, of rites of passage for birth, death and rebirth.

The relationship between loss, place, performance and commemoration has become central to my work over recent years. What began as a personal loss has evolved into an investigation into acts of remembrance for national loss. My research into ancient burial sites, shamanism, ritual and paper art has taken me from Wales to Scandinavia, Russia, Siberia (Lake Baikal) and on to Japan (Fukushima). I have created performances and land art in response to specific sites and events in each country.

A vital part of my shamanic practice is the intentional integration with the environment. No matter how, or why I end up in a specific site, whether it is to research, or perform, I will connect with the land, through shamanic journeys, before, during and after I have worked there. A shamanic journey is an intentional journey to non-ordinary reality, to seek guidance for oneself, the environment and others. The wisdom shared informs and aids my artistic practice and helps in the personal integration of the work throughout the process.

Throughout my research of loss, ancient burial rites and belief systems, certain questions have driven my practice: where have our rituals gone? Why do we not celebrate and honour the stages of our lives as we used to? Why are they hushed up and not talked about, or whispered behind cupped palms? Can we celebrate the lives of unborn children openly and respectfully?

A few weeks after my miscarriage, I visited the west coast of Wales. I wrote a poem to our child on a piece of paper and made it into a boat. I then filled it with flowers and fruit from my parents' garden and carried it to the sea. As the tide turned, I watched and listened to the waves for

some time, before I carefully released the boat onto a wave that would take her out to sea. I followed her journey, as the current took her away. Her path was decorated with a floral veil upon the surface of the water, the fruit gradually sinking into the depths.

This boat, and the words written upon her body, held my dreams and my loss. In the creation of it, I was honouring the very short life of our child and symbolically nurturing her for her next journey. Once she was released to the sea, I had no control over the boat, nor how long she would exist in this form. In creating the ritual, a shift of perception had occurred, enabling me to see the beauty amidst the pain and to acknowledge the importance of surrendering to the cycle of life and death.

During the preparation of this personal ritual, I had been driven by necessity to mark the intangible loss with physical actions and gifts. My grief had spilled over, like the blood I had lost and watched, as it saturated my clothes. I needed to create a container to hold my grief; in a vessel that was set free. This was a loss intangible to others, for there was no body. Yet I had seen her heart beating. My body had expelled her and I could not push her back in. I held her physical mass in my hands. I was the only one to witness this.

My body had physically transformed to nurture our child. I had rejoiced at my constantly changing shape, embracing this new tenderness and my absolute right to sit in the seat on the bus reserved for pregnant women. I felt bereft upon my return to the standard bus seat, as my body returned to functioning solely for me. I could let go of my nutritional guidelines, even though I did not want to. As my body physically healed, I subconsciously chose not to inhabit the pain held within it. I survived the loss by filling my body with food and neglecting exercise. I comforted my feelings, fed the loss and neither connected to the essence of pain, nor released it.

During this disconnection to my body, I looked externally for reflections of my state, in the elements and in nature. I went for walks and was drawn to the qualities of fallen leaves, seedpods, butterfly wings and skins of snakes and dragonflies, that had been shed and lay upon the ground. I found their fragility and empty skins inspiring and hopeful, as if there was a possibility for me to transform, to come through this winter of the soul. At the same time, I also felt comforted by the skeletal forms and abandoned shells of bodies—there was a balance of acceptance and hope within these forms. As I witnessed the course of our seasonal cycles, I

remembered the words of Nichiren Daishonin (a thirteenth century Japanese Buddhist monk), in his letter to the lay nun Myoichi: "Winter always turns to spring" (1999, p. 535). I repeated these words often, to remind myself that my state of darkness would pass. I was also comforted by the words of Gwyneth Lewis (2006):

> The abyss of depression is a precious thing. It feels like sadness, like emotional death. But, just as winter isn't the absence of life, but only a stage in the cycle of vitality, feeling low is an essential part of living. (p. 135)

The shed skins and leaves, combined with the commemorative ritual of the paper boat, proved to be a powerful catalyst for my creativity. I began to look at paper as a material and as a metaphor of skin. My research led me to paper artists within the United Kingdom and to Japan, renowned for its diversity of high quality, handmade and manufactured papers, which are used on a daily basis, from wrapping items to religious objects, origami to costume. I discovered an artist, who happened to be retiring and wanted to sell some of her materials: and this is where my experiments with water-strength paper began.

Almost three years after my miscarriage, I challenged myself to one month of creative exploration and decided to begin on April Fools' Day, with the rising sap of spring. My first journey was to Avebury, where my great aunt had worked as an assistant to the archaeological team of Alexander Keiller. I was drawn to her life, because she had also experienced loss and pain, amongst the remains of this ancient cultural site. I thought of her buried losses, in the recesses of her soul, whilst looking at photographs of the digs in the museum archives. I then came across documentation of the child's skeleton which had been found onsite.

During my research at Avebury, in the archives and amongst the stones, I felt a deepening love and compassion for my maternal ancestors. I remembered the flowers I had picked as a child, to place on my mother's coffin and the assortment of flowers and herbs I had gathered from my garden, as a young woman, for my grandmother's onward journey. I had made my own personal commemorative rituals for my relatives, but what about the burial rites of mesolithic and neolithic peoples? As I delved into this research, I was struck by the items buried with humans in graves, particularly those found in Russia, Scandinavia and the British Isles, where, amongst other items, parts of birds (ospreys and swans) were discovered.

Concurrent to this research was my increasing experience and knowledge of power animals within shamanic practice. It came as no surprise to find these particular birds present in birth and death rites, for example the mesolithic *Vedbæk* burial in Denmark, where a newborn baby was placed upon a swan's wing and buried next to his mother. The belief that the child's soul would be transported by the swan's flight gave me great comfort and inspiration. Swans are able to span the three elements of air, water and earth, corresponding to the three worlds of upper, lower and middle in shamanic practice (Fig. 13.1).

Fig. 13.1 Alarch: Swirl by Clare Parry-Jones

I returned to work with paper and made a second skin for my body, inspired by the shed skins and wings I had found in nature. Playing with water, I recreated the movement of a swan's wings and improvised with small paper boats in a bowl. I then created two life-sized, hand-sewn, paper bodies of a mother and foetus and returned to the coast. I took them to the seashore and worked on the sand and in caves with the incoming tide, then on rocks and within the water. They took on a life of

their own as they interacted with the elements, the air filling their bodies before they began to drown. In retrospect, I had literally created bodies to hold my grief, as I could not face the enormity of my losses. The beauty of their movements echoed the landscape of emotions within myself. Gwyneth Lewis talks about her emotions in terms of weather systems:

> In weather patterns I could see the emotional depression that had floored me in atmospheric terms and this extended my understanding of the metaphor. For example, high pressure systems sound stressful, but because no air is able to move, they are very stable, with no wind. Low pressure, however, leads to storms because wind flows in to replace rising air, creating the familiar warm and cold fronts. This explains the emotional turbulence which can be created by an unstable internal meteorology. (2005, p. 14)

A few months later, I was awarded an artists' residency with National Theatre Wales, on the island of Anglesey (*Ynys Môn*), which is also known as *Môn Mam Cymru* (Môn, Mother of Wales). It was the perfect place to bring my interests together, the island rich in ancient sites and accessible beaches, so that I could explore my theatre and land art practices. I researched performance with paper bodies on the seashore and in neolithic burial chambers. During feedback with fellow residential artists, I was able to reflect upon place and site as an integral part of cultural memory.

Early one morning, I walked along a path beside a stream, disturbing a heron in its hunt for food. The path led me to an open field shrouded in mist. As I stepped forward a grassy mound revealed itself, through the protective veil of mist, to be *Bryn Celli Ddu* (The Mound in the Dark Grove). At the entrance, spiders' webs sparkled with dew, attracting me into the passage. A silence, accompanied by the smell of damp earth and wet grass welcomed me. After crouching to enter the long, narrow passage, I reached the chamber, which was spacious and dry. After time to absorb the stillness and soft light, I began to improvise with my paper bodies, working with the knowledge that an intruder would bring darkness, as they blocked the passage of light. Working creatively within this space, I was able to connect to my grief, and also to begin to understand the profundity of such a chamber, constructed to protect and pay respect to the remains of the ancestors.

During my physical exploration and times of stillness in this burial chamber, I began to see the connection of its design to our physical passage of life and that of our environment. *Bryn Celli Ddu* is a long passage

grave (a long, narrow passage made of large stones with one or more burial chambers at the end, covered with a ceiling of earth) with a circular chamber at the end. This shape directly relates to that of the cervix and womb, a passage of return to a nurturing chamber and to be (re) birthed. Not only is the physical design reflective of the human environment in which we all begin life, but it also connects deeply to the diurnal arc (passage of time from the rising to the setting) of the sun, especially at dawn on the longest day of the year, when the sun shines directly through the passage, to light the chamber.

With these thoughts in mind, and conversations with *Cadw* (Welsh Government's historic conservation service), I was granted permission to visit a stunning burial chamber by the sea (which is now kept locked to protect the site): *Barclodiad y Gawres* (The Giantess's Apronful). A gentle breeze and warm summer sun accompanied me as I walked along the coastal path above the sandy beach, through the long grass, wild flowers and up to the top of the hill. There, overlooking the sea and mountains, lay the burial chamber. I entered the passage, unlocked the gate and walked into the cool darkness, passing through beautifully carved stones and greeted by a swallow, chirping and circling the chamber.

The entrance is from the north and the central space has three small chambers off it, which would all originally have had capstones (horizontal stone placed above two vertical stones). Now only the south chamber retains its capstone, an impressive sight directly opposite the entrance, receiving light through the passage. Over a period of three days, I conducted some rituals to introduce myself to the space and to get to know it. I then experimented with my paper bodies and performance improvisations.

I placed the bodies upon and under the stones, lying down with them on the ground, or wrapping myself up in their skins. The paleness of the paper contrasted dramatically with the green layers of moss upon the stones and the red earth beneath. I recreated the design of the mother and child skeletons of *Vedbaek*, the baby placed upon a swan's wing, using white clay pipe stems I had found years before on the banks of the River Thames, close to where I was born. I wanted to introduce a three-dimensional element to the artwork by using the pipe stems. They also linked me to my birthplace and the notion of death and rebirth; the worn clay a sign of the repetitive, wearing action of water upon them; the soft, pale material a reminder of the Mayan tradition of washing bones of deceased relatives (Fig. 13.2).

Fig. 13.2 Alarch: Torso by Clare Parry-Jones

Within these chambers, rituals would have occurred countless times. Creating a modern ritual in an ancient site led me to appreciate the designs of these sacred sites, in terms of their relationship to ritual, their positioning in relation to the surrounding landscape and their psychological impact upon the soul and body. The design of the narrow, darkening passage creates a threshold between the outer physical world and the inner psychic worlds. The round, womb-like chamber provides a holding space, sheltered, grounded and calm, supporting the main part

of the ritual of transformation. The passage then marks the transition from the dark inner world to the light of the "new" world, as the initiated reintegrates back into society, or into a different stage of life/rebirth. At *Barclodiad y Gawres*, the geographical position incorporates the three worlds: on top of a hill (closest to the air above), within the earth, yet adjacent to the sea and upon exiting, being faced with the descent of the hill, the mountains in the distance, the horizon of the sea and the unknown beyond. The large stones present at all of the sites hold the structure, both physically and spiritually, in turn grounding the human body, ready for the spiritual flight. To enter through a passage into a dark cave to perform a ritual and then to re-enter the light of the world marks a physical and psychological transformation.

> All true rituals mark a transition from one mode of being to another, working a transformation within the individual or community, at a deep psychological, physical and spiritual level, resulting in an altered state of consciousness. Such major rituals … are sometimes known as rites of passage. Clearly the passage is not geographical, from point A to point B, but rather a journey of the heart, into the interior landscape of each individual, resulting in 'a sea-change into something rich and strange', as Shakespeare wrote in *The Tempest*. (Roose-Evans 1996, pp. 5–6)

The anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep observed three stages of ritual (as cited in Grainger 2012):

> … a *pre-liminal* phase of separation or detachment from the current state of affairs, whatever that may be; a central *liminal* phase which lies between what has been up to now and what will be from now on ('limen' is Latin for threshold) and a final or *post-liminal* stage of establishment in a situation which, having been effectively separated from what went before, is genuinely new. (p. 222)

My paper boat ritual gave a structure to facilitate the passage of grief. The psychological intention of release was embedded into the writing of the poem. This was then physicalised through the creation of the boat, collecting the fruit and flowers and climbing down the headland to the sea. Checking the tides and currents facilitated the final step of setting the boat free. In this last release, I symbolically relinquished the physical matter of our child. The framework of ritual enabled me to ground, each step in the process bringing me closer to letting go, so that I could be

supported by the earthly and enter into a journey of the heart, establishing the spiritual connection to our child.

Reflecting upon my performance improvisations within the sacred sites on Anglesey, I realised my desire to not only create performance that commemorates, but within this, to make opportunities for the audience/witnesses to interact. By creating a safe structure, I could invite the observers to become participants in their own act of commemoration, within the performance. Perhaps this would ignite a desire to create their own ritual of letting go, or an act of remembrance? I began to feel the wisdom of our ancestors in their active integration of ritual to mark life events. I felt the desire to create this within my own daily life, performance and land art.

What had also helped me through some of the most challenging times, particularly in hospital, was my sense of humour. Sitting on a bed in the accident and emergency department of a hospital may not seem so funny. It was not—at all. But my life was about to present me with gifts of material. The doctor had insisted I give a urine sample, which I did not feel I could give. I complied and walked to the toilet. It was there that I miscarried. In shock, I rang the alarm bell, as the blood wasn't stopping. I asked for help and the nurse brought me an incontinence nappy "oh great, I've just lost my baby and you give me a nappy!" As I walked down the corridor towards my dear friend who had driven me to hospital, I could not help but laugh, as I saw the image of myself, walking as if I had just got off a horse after a long ride, with only a blouse and nappy on. Upon re-admittance to hospital a few days later, the night was filled with the cries of a woman giving birth on the floor beneath me and a demented woman howling in the corridor outside my room. During my research in *Barclodiad y Gawres*, I got changed into my white costume behind a stone and slowly stood up. Suddenly a man let out the loudest yelp and a mouthful of expletives, as I gave him the biggest fright of his life, thinking he had just seen a ghost emerging from the dark. It was even more shocking when he realised it was a clown in white!

Comedy and tragedy, crisis and opportunity, chaos and creativity. I work with four principles in clown, as taught in the Pochinko method: present yourself; take me into your world; transform me; bring me back with a new awareness. This structure directly relates to that of ritual, enabling a deeper connection to facilitate change, both for the performer and audience. It demands being present, in connection with

yourself, your environment and all within it: this is also what is necessary within shamanic practice. I believe these three methods create a powerful structure for the audience to directly engage with, particularly in the arena of loss, remembrance and commemoration.

I brought these aspects together in my performance of *Angel-C* (pronounced *Anglesey*), which was performed in St Anne's Church at the Made in Roath Festival, Cardiff. Sea-swept, disintegrating paper bodies were hung above the congregation, a soundscape emerged from the piano, and the audience were led into a barely lit church. I sat beside the high altar, on a tiny chair, with a portable manual typewriter, tapping the keys, writing a letter to my child, the paper becoming a wave of water that ran down the steps to the audience. I emerged from the dark, to light candles and lead the audience to the *Vedbaek* trio, who were lying in the lady chapel. At one point the audience were invited to participate in creating their own rituals of letting go, making paper boats and symbolically setting them off on the water of the font, which had been decorated with plants and flowers from my garden. The whole was interspersed with humour (someone's head got caught under my gown at the font, as she tried to pull up my drawers that had fallen to my ankles mid ceremony).

Feedback from the audience expressed the level of engagement with the process:

> I was moved in a way that tore my heart in two. Your honesty, creativity, and beauty in the way you perform, inspires me ever so. I have tried to deal (unsuccessfully) with the personal loss of loved ones these past few years. I never grieved for these, nor for a terrible, horrible decision I made 6 years ago regarding my unborn child. I want to thank you, from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to grieve in a way I never thought possible. You made an event that pretty much has changed my soul.
>
> I loved the use of the fragile paper that represented the fragments of adult and child on the floor and expression of the pain of loss. It was for me a wonderful image of a fragment of souls. I was reminded of the poppy as a symbol of remembrance this time of year and Ted Hughes' description in his poem RED: "And outside the window poppies thin and wrinkle-frail as the skin on blood."
>
> Being permitted to see you so open and vulnerable with the paper bodies and then share in your ritual with the boats and the flowers and herbs was really effective, it felt incredibly warm and generous. It felt like you knew it would help us all feel better and it had great import as a result.

> It made me think about the rituals I could allow myself. (personal communication, October 2013)

Performing in a church meant that I could use fire and water and create ceremony and laughter within a sacred space. The sounds of winter outside (howling gales and driving rain) complemented the soundtrack within, created by Chris Young (Acouchristo). Chris accompanied me in my performance explorations on the seashore of Anglesey and within *Barclodiad y Gawres*, creating sound art in response to the place and essence of the piece. It included the flight and cry of a swallow, which was circling the chamber when we arrived.

Choosing the site for my performances and research forms an important part of the process. It also happens that the site chooses me, and I have no choice but to work with it and to discover what story waits to be told. In my first experiment with paper bodies, I chose a remote location, so that I would not be interrupted and a place where I knew the tidal action well. The physical landscape reflected the very nature of my internal landscape at that time: the entrance to a cave along a narrow, high walled passage, a rockpool the shape of a womb. When I later returned, both the landscape within the cave and the shape of the rockpool had changed, due to the shifting of sands and stones after tidal activity.

I have often found myself working in an area to which I am drawn, not knowing why, only to discover that events have happened there previously that directly relate to the nature of my creations. During my research, I lost one of my paper bodies in a bay, whilst I was filming in the sea. Early the next morning we learnt that a man had drowned there the night before. In my mind's eye, I kept seeing the image of the paper body sinking in the water. Suddenly I felt a connection between my personal grief and that of the people connected to this man. It began to draw me out of my own world and into that of a more universal place of loss.

I started to incorporate myth into my creations, as a way of exploring universal archetypes. The myth of the selkie, which has long enchanted me, had particular resonance at this time. This northern story tells of selkies, who are seals in water, but when they come on shore, they shed their skins and become maidens on land. The tale has many variants: a maiden's sealskin is stolen by a fisherman, forcing her to stay on land. She agrees to marry this man, on condition that after seven years her skin

will be returned. After seven years, and birthing a child, she asks for her skin to be returned. This is not granted, but her child finds the skin and returns it to her. They go down to the sea whilst the husband is asleep and she slips into the water, leaving her child on the shore. I created paper selkies and spent hours in the sea, filming the paper bodies underwater and improvising on the seashore.

In 2015, I was invited to continue my research into clown and shamanism and to perform at a festival on Olkhon Island in Lake Baikal, Siberia. This was a further development of my relationship with Russian theatre group, Teatrika, with whom I had collaborated since 2013. During my time on the island, I discovered a similar myth in the local Buryat culture, involving a swan and the story allegedly happened on Olkhon. I created a paper swan and woman, working in the waters of the lake. Whilst there, I learnt that many shamans were killed in the forests by the Cossacks, who also destroyed the sacred trees and built upon the shamanic burial grounds. This prompted me to create huge, life-sized, human/tree bodies, walking/flying through the trees in the forests that now exist there. It became a positive act of commemorating the lives of the shamans and their spirits. I also created a performance on Peschanka pier, a rotten, wooden pier that shrinks into the distance. This was once an active pier at the centre of a forced labour camp. Here, once again, I worked with paper bodies on the pier and in the water, involving the image of the swan, linking the Buryat version of the selkie/swan myth with the role of the swan in mesolithic burial practice. My intention was to commemorate the lives of the many prisoners who died in horrendous conditions. Both of these acts of commemoration marked a period of history which surrounded us, literally beneath our feet, within the forests and the walls of the houses in the village. My personal response was a political act of commemoration, not only for people being persecuted for their beliefs in the past, but a reminder of what continues to happen today.

My first trip to Siberia was in March 2014, where I joined a team of ice sculptors and technicians, to work on Lake Baikal, which was covered in a thick layer of ice, at least three metres deep. We created hundreds of life-sized ice sculptures of horses galloping over the lake. Every morning we created a ritual to honour Baikal, the spirits and ancestors and to give our gratitude and prayers for protection. This was a normal daily practice and brought the team together with a shared intention, as well as strengthening our connection to the environment.

The practicalities of working with the seasons and tides, the physical effects of the elements, whether they be −40 degrees on a frozen lake in Siberia, or a spring tide on the Welsh coast, demand active presence, involving all the senses, observation and respect. I enjoy co-creating with the elements and all that the environment presents me with. I give the stories a physical life, but only temporarily (though moments are captured in photography and film).

I use materials that are plant-based and biodegradable, in landscapes that are constantly changing and within elements that influence the materials and how I work with them. My passion for Japanese paper and interest in the Buddhist rituals for deceased babies (stillbirth, miscarriage or abortion) has led me to conduct research in Japan over the last two years. The term for these rituals is *Mizuko kuyo*, which literally translates as "water babies." Another ceremony is *Tōrō Nagashi*, at the end of the Festival of Bon, created to honour the ancestors. During this ceremony, paper lanterns are lit and placed onto water, to float down the river, guiding the souls to the spirit world. Some traditional Japanese beliefs state that humans originated from water, so the lanterns symbolise the bodies returning to their source. Once again, we see here the ancient beliefs of the eternal cycle of life and death, with similar acts of commemoration being performed throughout the world, thousands of miles and years apart.

> Ritual is a means of approaching the inner world that the human race evolved early in its history. The use of ritual goes back to the earliest dawn of time among our prehistoric ancestors. Ritual is one of the faculties we have, like dreaming, that enable us to set up a flow of communication between the conscious mind and the unconscious. (Johnson 1989, p. 101)

After my performance of *Angel-C*, an audience member noted: "The use of the Font to sail the boats was great and very symbolic of baptism as a journey to a new beginning" (personal communication, October 2013). These acts of commemoration also have the potential to create a space for rebirth.

I felt a resonance between the Japanese ceremonies with water, and the images I had created with the paper foetus and mother in the water of the cave, which I had adorned with sprinkled flower blossoms and watched as the gentle sounds of the sea soothed me. I saw many shrines dedicated to the commemoration of the lives of unborn babies and spoke

to priests in temples dedicated to children. I experienced the direct relation of Buddhist ceremonies honouring the change of seasons, using all four elements in their rituals. I realised how the loss of my own child and subsequent infertility could be directly related to the national loss of Japan, following the Fukushima nuclear incident, of both human and environmental life. The impact of this disaster is not always visible to the eye: the land and water are polluted, marine life has been devastated, food sources poisoned. We can see and feel the physical loss of human life, the homes, buildings, transport systems, etc. I wanted to give a voice to the unseen losses, which were, and are, being denied and neglected by the government. In 2015, I created a short film *Repose*, with Yasuro Ito (Underground Airport Theatre) at Enoshima Island, to commemorate this loss of life. I collected the dead paper bodies from the sea, washed them in a natural spring flowing from the rocks on the beach, then laid them to rest upon the rocks, with camellia flowers that were falling from the trees above. A black kite (hawk) cried above us, as Yasuro sang a traditional Japanese song of mourning.

A few months ago, I had been in preparation to adopt two children with my partner. I travelled to Japan in the spring and wrote prayers for the children and our new family-to-be on e*ma* (wooden prayer plaques), hanging them by temple shrines in the woods and hills. I felt that what had originally brought me to Japan, my creative response to our child dying, had transformed into a physical manifestation of children. I experienced the joy and excitement of all the preparations and upon my return home, enjoyed making their bedrooms, filling the cupboards with food, planting trees for them in the garden. I made a welcoming-in ritual for them, creating two paper coracles from clematis fronds and paper, using my newfound, technical paper-working skills from Japan. I filled them with flowers and fruit and set them off, upon a wave, to welcome these little ones into our lives, wherever they were.

We packed our bags, not for hospital, but for the introduction period with the children. Yet, it was eventually not to be. We drove home in an empty car, devastated, to a home made up for two small children. As I come to terms with this familiar territory of child-loss and commemoration in my life, I know that my creative response is gestating. The boundaries between marking loss, acts of commemoration and performance become blurred. The typewriter awaits the unwritten letters to the children, for their life story files.

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CHAPTER 14

Searching Shadows, Lighting Bones: Commemorative Performance as an Open-Ended Negotiation

A Chapter in 27 Fragments

Emily Orley

Introduction

In 2016, I finished developing a solo performance called *Searching Shadows* about my Russian immigrant grandfather, the early days of the X-ray, and the precarious nature of memory. It was an hour long and arranged in 27 fragments to reflect the 27 bones that make up the human hand. I used spoken word, old family photographs, X-ray images and clips of recorded sound, relying on a single desk lamp, an old 35 millimetre carousel slide projector and an array of other analogue machines to conjure a tale about a man I barely knew. I was prompted to make the piece after discovering a jumbled collection of my grandfather's

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letters and memoirs at the back of a filing cabinet and inspired by the idea that John Berger explores in *Here Is Where We Meet* (2006), that the dead are still with us.

I used very little of my own words, but relied heavily on found images and texts: sections of the uncovered memoirs, historical reports about X-rays, newspaper clippings, poetry, documentary and fiction. Some of the 27 parts consisted of read passages, some of only sound and some of only gesture. Sometimes they included all three. The story of my grandfather's life as he travelled around Europe before, during and after the First World War and trained to become a radiologist, and the many strands of history with which he was involved, were only gradually pieced together, as if I were reassembling the bones of an exhumed hand. Thus, the bigger picture only made sense at the end. I intentionally kept the narrative fragmented and non-linear. It was, I think now, a commemorative performance, although that is not necessarily what I set out to make. I will explain.

Archaeologist, Laurajane Smith, writes that heritage is 'something vital and alive', 'a moment of action, not something frozen in material form' (2006, p. 83). I approached my grandfather's papers as heritage objects and explored how to celebrate their vitality and aliveness by engaging with them in ways that I tried to keep creative and open-ended. In *Uses of Heritage* (2006), Smith elaborates on her definition of heritage as a cultural process of meaning and memory-making (and remaking) rather than a thing but she also acknowledges the critical reality that there are physical things and places that we like to call heritage (p. 74). Referencing Arturo Escobar she argues that heritage, much like place, can and indeed should be viewed as both 'a category of thought and as a constructed reality' (Escobar 2001, p. 140). I took this dual definition of heritage as my starting point when making the performance as I began to experiment in how to engage with my chosen personal heritage objects while trying not to fix or preserve them. I wanted to perform a remembering that was open-ended and unbound, negotiating my here-and-now while dealing with a memento from the past. This became not only an unofficial practice of heritage but also a means of honest reflection and knowledge transmission. All the while, I attempted to honour Smith's description of heritage as a 'multi-layered performance… that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while negotiating and constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present' (p. 3).

So I engaged in a process in which place, meaning and identity (my own but also my grandfather's) were actively created and recreated.

Sociologist, David Turnbull, writes that 'we create space in the process of travelling through it and in creating narratives of journeys we construct knowledge' (2002, p. 133). I sought to create new space as I sorted through the found pages, creating a narrative of my own journey, which, I hoped, would open up new spaces for new narratives. Cultural geographer, Doreen Massey, defines place as an ever-shifting constellation of trajectories that cannot be neatly contained in time and space (2005, p. 151). They are 'articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings' (1994, p. 154). She writes:

> What is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or the eternity of the hills. Rather, what is special about place is pre-cisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and geography of then and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman. (2005, p. 140)

I chose to view the pages written by my grandfather and then stored by my father in a filing cabinet, as places themselves, 'throwntogethernesses', which were calling for a negotiation. As places, they were still changing (still are) and could not be bound to a particular era or location (the very paper he wrote on itself, for example, had its own history and existed before he wrote on it). The performance I made was commemorative because it provided a platform for such negotiation.

For the *Staging Loss* symposium, I wanted to offer a critical discussion of my original performance while staying faithful to the creative drive that inspired me in the first place. I could not attend in person, so I chose to send a recording of me reading it. I arranged the discussion in 27 fragments as I had arranged the original performance, and chose to record it on vinyl as people had used discarded X-rays to make illicit replacement vinyl records in the Soviet Union in the 1940s and 1950s (see Fragment 21 below). The critical discussion was written as Jane Rendell-esque site-writing, composed in response to the first performance. By using site-writing, I could critically but also creatively extend and elaborate on the commemorative work I had begun before. Invented and described by Rendell in her 2010 book *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism*, it is a mode of criticism that foregrounds the sites of engagement with artworks rather than just the artworks themselves. The criticism then becomes an artwork in its own right. Rendell calls this a critical spatial practice and uses it to explore

the textual and material possibilities of writing, its spatial potential: 'the patterning of words on a page, the design of a page itself – its edges, boundaries, thresholds, surfaces, the relation of one page to another' (p. 17). For her, the critic is 'a particular kind of art *user*', as this term suggests 'a more active and inherently spatial role, one which includes the optic but which is not driven solely by the visual and which involves both interpretation and performance' (p. 3). The critic needs to be creative in her response to the work in order to do it justice and Rendell refers to a wide range of literary and cultural theorists, art historians, feminist thinkers and psychoanalysts to support her argument. She writes that 'the use of analogy – the desire to invent a writing that is somehow 'like' the artwork – allows a certain creativity to intervene in the critical act as the critic comes to understand and interpret the work by remaking it on his/her own terms' (p. 7). Site-writing as a practice, is inherently commemorative (in the best possible and most radical way).

And so here, in this chapter, I present another version of a site-writing of my performance. Once again it is arranged in 27 fragments, which only come into focus as the writing progresses. Each fragment is named after a hand bone. I explain myself in bursts (see Fragment 14). The argument, the final image, the hand, only begins to make sense as the bones are arranged alongside each other. Quotations are placed alongside quotations, alongside descriptions, alongside anecdotes, alongside reports, alongside the beginnings of discussions. My grandfather's auto-ethnographical narrative is juxtaposed with medical and historical facts and lines from stories and novels. What comes below is not coherent, and is full of tangents. It does not seek to fix or preserve what I originally made (which would not make sense to the reader, having not seen the performance), but rather to offer it up again as something to be negotiated anew. Just as I hoped to engage the viewer of my performance with disjointed fragments that pointed to a larger and more complicated set of historical narratives, so I hope this site-writing will also call for active participation from the reader. It is an active participation-negotiation that we might call commemorative (Fig. 14.1).

Fragment 1

Scaphoid: 25 years after my grandfather died I found a muddled collection of memoirs and letters he had written at the back of a filing cabinet. They included tales about his life as a migrant before, during and after the First World War and described, in a fragmented and roundabout way,

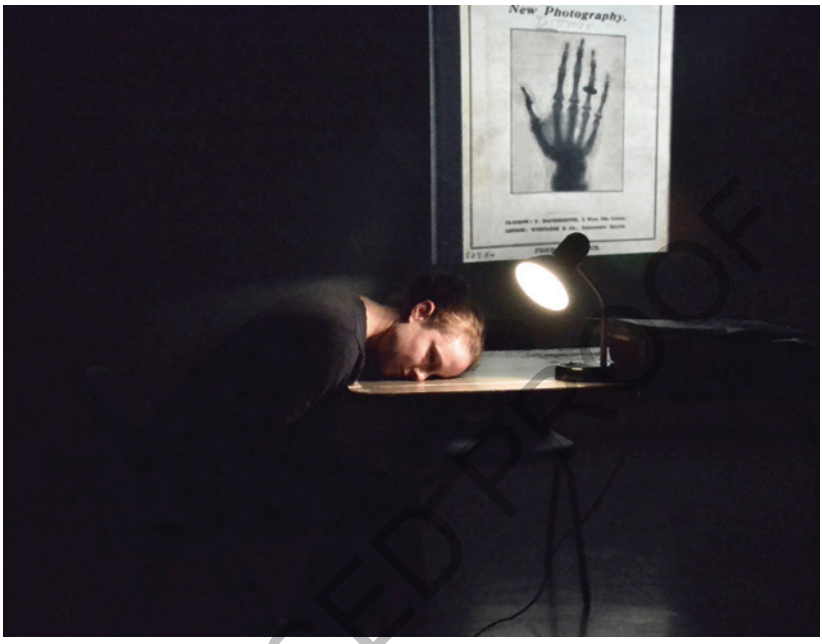

Fig. 14.1 Emily Orley, *Searching Shadows* (2016)

his journey from Russia to London where he became a radiologist in the early 1930s. I developed a performance using those papers and a series of old photographs and X-rays. I wanted to see if, by exploring how X-rays were first made, I might X-ray someone who was no longer here, using only a handful of objects they had left behind. I wanted to do a kind of remembering that could be shared and kept open.

Fragment 2

Lunate: After the discovery of the X-ray by Professor Roentgen in late 1895, there came a radical shift in what we were able to see. For the first time, the bones inside living bodies were made visible. Flesh was made transparent. One of Roentgen's first experiments was an X-ray of his wife Bertha's hand with a ring on her finger. Of all his first pictures that were circulated around the world, it was that of the human hand that made the greatest impression on the public (Glasser 1934, p. 32). Everywhere, people began testing the new radiation with their hands.

There was a sudden proliferation of pictures of the bones in human hands.

Human hands contain 27 bones. Among them, the lunate, the scaphoid, the capitate.

Fragment 3

Triquetrum: Many of the following words are not my own. Italo Calvino writes: 'In other words, you and I are only meeting places for messages from the past' (2009, p. 233). Mary Paterson writes: 'Our bodies do not keep us apart' (2014).

Fragment 4

Pisiform: John Berger writes: 'What reconciles me to my own death more than anything else is the image of a place: a place where your bones and mine are buried, thrown, uncovered, together. They are strewn there pell-mell. One of your ribs leans against my skull. A metacarpal of my left hand lies inside your pelvis. (Against my broken ribs your breast like a flower.) The hundred bones of our feet are scattered like gravel. It is strange that this image of our proximity, concerning as it does mere phosphate of calcium, should bestow a sense of peace. Yet it does. With you I can imagine a place where to be phosphate of calcium is enough' (1984, p. 101).

Fragment 5

Hamate: My grandfather was born in January 1892 in Bialystok, which was then in Russia. In 1914 he went to Geneva to study medicine and while he was there World War One broke out. One diary entry reads:

> *Russian reservists abroad had not been recalled to Russia, but, caught up in the patriotic fervour of the time, I felt it was my duty to join the Allied forces. As a foreigner, I could not join the French army, but I could join, I was told, the Foreign Legion. The name did not mean anything to me.*

Fragment 6

Capitate: Looking back, I see that the making of my performance was driven by two key concepts. I set out to honour Smith's description of heritage as a 'multi-layered performance… that embodies acts of

remembrance and commemoration while negotiating and constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present' (2006, p. 3). I wanted to find a method for celebrating the dynamic quality of heritage by engaging with a series of objects in a creative, open-ended way (Orley, 2017). I wanted to use them to tell a series of personal stories, to weave a pluralistic narrative rather than present an apparently detached factual account (if such a thing really exists). Oral historian, Alessandro Portelli, writes that 'Memory is not a passive depository of facts but an active process of creation of meanings' (1991, p. 52). Memory, like heritage, is an active process of meaning-making, so I chose to engage with, reflect, recount it, through the time-based form of performance, which changes with each enactment. The other key idea that inspired my performance was the notion that John Berger explores in his 2006 novel, *Here Is Where We Meet*, that the dead are still with us. This is not a macabre idea but one that opens up possibilities for new conversations about bearing witness.

Fragment 7

Trapezoid: Theatre scholar, Freddie Rokem, writes that in the context of performing history, the actor is a hyper-historian, a witness for witnesses now dead, a connecting link between the historical past and the 'fictional' performed here and now of the theatrical event (2000, p. 13). In my performance, I constructed a conversation with my dead grandfather. I commemorated his life, but also the contexts in which he existed. I bore witness now because he no longer could, but I did it as performer. I did not pretend to be him, but in reading words from his diaries, I called the events of his life into the present and into the presence of the spectators. In reading his words, I wanted to recreate something which had been irretrievably lost (p. 13).

Fragment 8

Trapezium: My grandfather did not fare well in the French Foreign Legion. He writes about the limited food they were given and how this made drill particularly exhausting. He was relieved when, as a medical student, he was chosen to work in the infirmary.

> *My fellow orderlies were a Serb, who said he was a Law student, and a middle-aged pharmacist. We lived in the infirmary. As beds we used regulation stretchers, about 18 inches wide. After the bare floor they felt*

> *luxurious. […] I kept on losing weight and must have looked dejected. Our chief, Medecin Major, remarked on several occasions on my poor looks. He was of the opinion, he told us once, that a volunteer should be allowed to change his mind. One day he told me he wanted to examine my lungs. He diagnosed a tuberculous legion in my left lung and recommended my discharge from the Army.*

When he returned to Geneva for treatment, expecting to be sent to a sanatorium, the doctor there found nothing wrong with his lungs. He realised only then that the army doctor had deliberately misled the authorities out of compassion. As a chest specialist in civilian life, my grandfather writes, he could not have made that mistake.

Fragment 9

Metacarpal One: What does it mean, really, to commemorate through, or with performance? To commemorate means to mention as worthy of remembrance, to make eulogistic or honourable mention of, to celebrate in speech or writing. I add: to acknowledge, to honour, to reanimate. I add that to celebrate is to keep alive and vital. For the alive. To call into doubt rather than restore. Scholar and artist, Svetlana Boym, in *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), distinguishes between two different kinds of nostalgia: a restorative kind, which seeks to protect an absolute truth, to 'reconstruct the lost home', and a reflective kind which thrives more on the act of longing itself and calls any absolute truth, or lost home, into doubt. Reflective nostalgia explores inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones. She writes: 'At best, reflective nostalgia can present an ethical and creative challenge, not merely a pretext for midnight melancholias' (2001, p. xviii). And then: 'The dreams of imagined homelands cannot and should not come to life. They can have a more important impact on improving social and political conditions in the present as ideals, not as fairy tales come true' (p. 354). The performance I created was attempting to be reflective in Boym's sense and not restorative, to celebrate remembering reflexively and responsibly. The stories I chose to tell and the memories I chose to evoke were only part of a complex, incoherent and multi-faceted set of histories.

Fragment 10

Metacarpal Two: What if the dead were still with us? In the summer of 1914, when my grandfather found himself just outside Geneva at the outbreak of the First World War, I discovered that Jorge Luis Borges, his parents and his sister were also stranded there, while on holiday from Argentina.

In Borges' short story, *Tlön*, *Uqbar*, *Orbis Tertius* (originally published in 1940), he writes: 'Things duplicate themselves on Tlön; they also tend to grow vague or sketchy, and to lose detail when they begin to be forgotten. The classic example is the doorway that continued to exist so long as a certain beggar frequented it, but which was lost to sight when he died. Sometimes a few birds, a horse, have saved the ruins of an amphitheatre' (2000, p. 20).

What does it mean to remember? And what does it mean to forget? How far does our responsibility extend?

If the dead were still with us, I would like to think that they would keep us on our toes. They would remind us that their lives were not as one-sided as we might remember. That our memories of them are mere fragments. That they were more complicated. That events were more complicated. Involved more people. That the past was multifaceted and subjective and we have reduced it to something flatter. The dead might remind us that they were not one thing or another but many things all at once. In remembering my grandfather, I keep something of him alive, but I also deaden other parts of him, associating him with only certain expressions, colours, positions. In remembering some things, I am forgetting others. My responsibility then, is to remember that my memories are fragments of a much bigger, unruly and unpredictable picture. A complex, incoherent and multifaceted set of histories.

Fragment 11

Metacarpal Three: Rokem writes that theatre that performs history 'seeks to overcome both the separation and the exclusion from the past, striving to create a community where the events from the past will matter again' (2000, p. xii).

How do we keep things in sight without fixing them?

By making them matter again now.

Fragment 12

Metacarpal Four: John Berger writes: 'The visible brings the world to us. But at the same time, it reminds us ceaselessly that it is a world in which we risk to be lost' (1984, p. 50).

X-rays made the bones inside living bodies visible for the first time. Apparently, Roentgen's wife, Bertha, was disturbed by the radiographic image of her own hand and exclaimed: 'I have seen my death' (Macfarlane 2010). It is a world in which we risk to be lost.

Fragment 13

Metacarpal Five: Anthropologist, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, writes: 'Any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly' (1995, p. 27).

A commemorative performance is just one particular bundle of silences.

In my piece, I chose what to sound out and what to keep quiet. What to remember and what to forget.

Fragment 14

Proximal Phalanx One: I chose to use fragments as my method. Fragments in my performance and here in this chapter 27 of them. Because the fragment or modular form, as poet and scholar Peter Jaeger calls it, is a disruptive practice, disjunctive and often paratactical (2014). Words, images, ideas are placed side by side without conjunction. The explanation is implicit.

The fragment offers an alternative mode for cultural production. It allows for silences. It stimulates the imagination. It is a resistance to thought as purely outcome to the exclusion of process and engagement. I am inspired by the works of modernist poets (Gertrude Stein, Louis Zukofsky and Lyn Hejinian for example) but also, particularly, by Walter Benjamin's modular, citational methodology in *The Arcades Project* (1999) as a formal approach to critical writing. He believed that 'philosophico-historical constellations could be represented by a dialectical image rather than by dialectical argumentation' (Buck-Morss, 1989, p. 67). In other words, montage and dialectical juxtaposition might be

able to say more than the traditional logic of a sustained, historiographical argument. Or it might just say it better.[1]

Fragment 15

Proximal Phalanx Two: The hundred bones of our feet are scattered like gravel (Berger 1984, p. 101).

The inherent incompletion of a fragment renders it a sign of the movement beyond itself whereby it would be completed (Clark, p. 234).

Any commemorative performance can only ever be a fragment.

Fragment 16

Proximal Phalanx Three: Fragments, assembled, disrupt.

Seeing living bones, assembled, for the first time, was disruptive.

Fragments made visible.

To disrupt, as a method, keeps history open and non-fossilised. In creating my performance, my challenge was to celebrate objects that used to belong to my grandfather, pages that were written 40 years ago about a time 100 years ago, without fossilising them. I wanted to acknowledge that how my grandfather's pages are read (by me or by someone else) is an ever-changing reality. My embodied knowledge of the pages changes as my present changes. As I transmit this knowledge, which combines my own rememberings and those of others (such as my father's) and my own associations and imaginings, so my knowledge changes. As does yours, the reader's. And so the remembering process continues. What

[1]The use of the fragment in literature and philosophy has a rich history, and can be traced from the Pre-Socratic philosophers (whose thoughts come to us in fragments); to the Romantics (for example Friedrich Schlegel and Samuel Taylor Coleridge); to Friedrich Nietzsche (for example *The Will to Power* (1968) and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2005)); Walter Benjamin (whom I mention above); Roland Barthes (see for example *Roland Barthes* (1977, pp. 92–95)), the successive entries 'The circle of fragments'; 'the fragment as illusion', 'From the fragment to the Journal'; Jacques Derrida (for example his chapter '52 Aphorisms for a Foreword' in A. Papadakes et al. (1989)); to Maurice Blanchot (for example *The Step Not Beyond* (1992) and *The Writing of the of the Disaster* (2015); to the modernist poets (as well as the ones I have mentioned, T. S.Eliot and Ezra Pound). For discussions on the use of fragments, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy (1988), Timothy Clark (1992), and Simon Critchley (1997, pp. 105–117). See also *Creative Criticism: An Anthology and Guide* (Benson and Connors 2014, pp. 12–13) for a brief discussion of the use of the fragment in literature and criticism.

I attempted, then, was an action rather than a passive commemoration celebrating the vitality and aliveness of heritage. I wanted to perform a remembering that was open-ended and unbound, negotiating my here-and-now while dealing with a memento from the past.

Fragment 17

Proximal Phalanx Four: Commemoration, then, is a moment of action. The commemorative performance is something to be negotiated, again and again, in the ever-changing present. What is being remembered (person, object, event) cannot, should not, be restored in Boym's sense (see Fragment 9), but rather might conjure up a particular set of associations for the user. Associations that lead elsewhere, inevitably. Memories that point to other times and places, that suggest a different order of temporality and space. To animate the past in the now is, of course, to change it. In using fragments of my grandfather's story, but also other stories, histories, accounts, I wanted to keep the narrative multiple, personal, plural. By unearthing particular stories, I sought to encourage the invention of more. And the more stories that are created in relation to a past, the more that past remains multiple and unfixed. Vital and alive.

Fragment 18

Proximal Phalanx Five: On 21 August 1920, from Bialystok, my grandfather (now medically qualified and working in a hospital) watched the Russian Army advancing on Poland. There is a brief entry in his diary:

> *I was curious to watch the invasion and shall never forget the sight. The first to come into view were Cossacks mounted on fine horses. They were followed by a detachment of horse artillery. Then came a string of laden peasant carriages, drawn by the small Russian horses. A caravan of loaded camels came next, to be followed by a file of elephants carrying loads on their backs. I left because I had to be in the hospital in time for the morning round of the wards.*

Fragment 19

Middle Phalanx One: Trouillot writes: 'Narratives are necessarily emplotted in a way that life is not. Thus, they necessarily distort life whether or not the evidence upon which they are based could be proved correct' (1995, p. 6).

Any commemorative performance can only ever be a fragment.

Fragment 20

Middle Phalanx Two: We are born with about 300 soft bones. During childhood and adolescence, the cartilage grows and is slowly replaced by hard bone. Some of these bones later fuse together, so that the adult skeleton has 206 bones. We lose 96 bones along the way.

A commemorative performance is just one particular bundle of silences.
We choose what to sound out and what to keep quiet.
Things get lost along the way.

Fragment 21

Middle Phalanx Three: Singer, producer and film composer, Stephen Coates, in a book called *X-Ray Audio* (2015) writes: 'Many older people in Russia remember seeing and hearing strange, spooky vinyl type flexi-discs when they were young. They were called bones or ribs and contained music forbidden by the Soviet censor. They originated in the period from about 1946 to around 1964, during which the sound of such forbidden music became associated with images of the human skeleton. For, in a time when the recording industry was ruthlessly controlled by the state, bootleggers had discovered an extraordinary alternative means of reproduction: they were repurposing used X-ray film as the base for making bootleg records' (p. 9).

The recordings were produced laboriously one by one, the X-rays often cut into circles with nail scissors and then burned in the centre with a cigarette so they could be placed on turntables.

'They are images of pain and damage inscribed with the sound of forbidden pleasure; fragile photographs of the interiors of Soviet citizens, layered with the ghostly music that they secretly loved' (p. 9).

One of the first men to encode music onto exposed X-rays from medical archives and hospital dustbins was Ruslan Bogoslowski, who spent a total of 15 years in prison, at least five in Siberia, for his daring.

Every story is part of a complex, incoherent and multi-layered set of histories. Imagine your broken wrist, your lungs, inscribed with the music of Ella Fitzgerald or Elvis Presley. *Heartbreak Hotel* pressed onto your elbow.[2]

'One of your ribs leans against my skull' (Berger 1984, p. 101).

[2] See https://x-rayaudio.squarespace.com/x-rayaudiorecords/ for images of X-ray ribs and audio samples.

Fragment 22

Middle Phalanx Four: In 1921, when the Russian Army was defeated at Warsaw and practically annihilated, my grandfather wrote in his diary:

> *The defeated Soviet Army was now making its way back through our town. Wounded soldiers in ambulances and un-sprung peasant carts kept on arriving at the hospital and soon, not only all the beds, but also the floor between was occupied. We could take no more and I had to stand in the hospital yard turning away exhausted drivers… Our Russians were leaving. Somehow, the Commandant managed to organise a Hospital Train and the District Polish Medical Officer and I were ordered to accompany the train to Russia. We hid as patients in a hospital ward and emerged [as] bosom friends only after the Russians had left. Later on, he helped me to leave Poland, unaware of the false pretenses for my journey abroad.*

He managed to make himself invisible. And then visible again. These details get forgotten.

Fragment 23

Distal Phalanx One: Theatre scholar, Rebecca Schneider, writes: 'When we approach performance not as that which disappears (as the archive expects), but as both the act of remaining AND a means of re-appearance and 'reparticipation' […] we are almost immediately forced to admit that remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh' (2011, p. 101, my emphasis). She re-thinks performance not as ephemeral but that which 'remains differently' (p. 101), transformed into knowledge that resides in the body, in memory, ready to be communicated to other bodies. This knowledge has immaterial repercussions we cannot measure or account for.

To commemorate is to reparticipate is to negotiate.

'In other words, you and I are only meeting places for messages from the past' (Calvino, 2009, p. 233).

Fragment 24

Distal Phalanx Two: In 1921, my grandfather managed to convince the local Polish authorities to let him go to Germany to pick up some important medical equipment for a new medical centre. He never returned.

He never saw his family again. He settled in Berlin for six years, married his first wife and then moved to London where he became a radiologist.

He had a daughter who he does not mention. She appears on a deed-poll notice when my grandfather changed his name from Avram Orlianksy to Alexander Orley in 1931. Her surname changed too. He writes:

> *My wife began to show symptoms of insanity and after a few months had to be confined to a special institution. I obtained a divorce during one of her 'lucid periods'.*

He says no more about her. Although my mother told me that once he found her talking to a spoon.

Fragment 25

Distal Phalanx Three: 'Remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh.' (Schneider 2011, p. 101).

Fragment 26

Distal Phalanx Four: Looking back on a life after it has finished, a pattern emerges that often was not visible before. Once the flesh disappears, the bones mark out a particular map, a series of choices, strange coincidences, unlucky accidents and lucky escapes. The collection of diary entries and memoirs that I found, had been put together, edited, written and rewritten by my grandfather in his later life, after his second wife had died. Out of the countless episodes he describes, I have chosen only a few to mark out a particular map of his life. The other years, the ones I do not talk about, dissolve like flesh under the radioscopic glare.

As performance-makers, we choose what to keep quiet. What to forget.

Fragment 27

Distal Phalanx Five (the tip of the little finger):

Here ends my site-writing, which, it turns out has been an experiment. An experiment in trying to commemorate a performance that was trying to commemorate a life. In my original performance, I wanted to

Fig. 14.2 Emily Orley, *Searching Shadows* (2016)

approach my grandfather's memoirs, his work and the histories of which he was a part, in as fluid a way as possible, by allowing for silences, tangents, repetitions, incoherences and multiple voices. Rendell's spatial critical practice provided me with a frame to try and do this again, differently, on paper. But on paper, as in performance, as I grapple with what it means to commemorate again, I find that it has something to do with trying to keep the past alive and vital. Something to do with accounting for different perspectives and challenging one-sided historicity. I decide that, in the end, to commemorate is to invite re-participation and negotiation. To offer new possibilities (Fig. 14.2).

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CHAPTER 15

Staging Loss: A Conclusion—*Some Words Speak of Events. Other Words, Events Make Us Speak*

Michael Pinchbeck and Andrew Westerside

I

In 2014 I went to the Somme. It surprised me then, and it still surprises me now, how much it looked like the English countryside. The wounds in the earth, the scars left there 100 years ago have mostly, materially, all healed. Here and there pillboxes rise up from some brambles; what you might imagine was once the bed of a small river or stream, snaking along the edge of a field, turns out to be a trench-line, not quite swallowed by the earth. We stopped the car at the edge of a field. We'd seen something shiny in the dirt and wanted to take a closer look. It was an unexploded shell. I learned later on that one in every three shells fired didn't explode. I learned that farmers in Belgium and

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France have a name for the unearthing of unexploded ordinance, bullets, and bits of trenches that the earth vomits up whenever they plough their fields. They call it the *Iron Harvest.* When you find a shell, the correct procedure is to place it (carefully) at the edge of the field—preferably near a post or a telegraph pole—so that it can be collected and taken to controlled demolition centres for disposal. For whatever reason, for a brief moment, I didn't want to. I wanted to put it back. Conservative estimates suggest that the *Iron Harvest* will continue for another 500 years.

2

I thought about that shell when we came to writing the conclusion for this book, because it seemed both fitting and incongruous with the direction we've travelled. There is something intensely visceral, and violent, about the image of the earth churning and spewing back these dulled artefacts of the Great War. Something slow, something ill, and something profoundly theatrical. I thought about it as commemorative, in the ugliest possible way. I thought about Michael's chapter on Bolero and the fallout of the Bosnian war, chapters on death (Parry-Jones), on the bubbling manifestations of a nation's colonial shame (Pulford). I thought about sick and sickened earth in relief with the towering, impassive Thiepval Memorial to the Fallen of the Somme just a few miles down the road from where we'd stopped the car. I thought about the Beechey brothers, whose graves (where known), I'd visited on that trip. I got quite emotional when I visited the grave of Frank Beechey, who had died at the age of thirty (my age at the time of the visit) and whose personality, through his letters, was the Beechey I'd felt the greatest sense of kinship with. It struck me, and it strikes me again now, in closing, that commemoration ought not be confined to (or defined by) the sanitised remembrances of nation states and sombre leaders laying wreathes. It is also raw, and muddy, and confused. It cannot exist apolitically, because we cannot, either. It shapes and is shaped by the world around us, both its future, and its past. It is as complex and incongruous as we are. In that complexity, it performs.

3

It is April 2018 when I write this. The USA, the UK and France have just bombed Syria. President Trump has informed the UN that the US is 'Locked and Loaded'. President Putin has threatened retaliatory action. The news brims with threats of Russian cyber attacks on our digital and economic infrastructure. The UN have warned the world that we are on the brink of a new Cold War. I am in London attending a performance at the South Bank Centre. It is *Cowpuncher: Holly Blakey x Mica Levi*, a post-modern, millennial mash-up of dance and music. As I wait to enter the newly refurbished Queen Elizabeth Hall, I see a gold embossed engraving on the marble wall. It reads: 'Composer and Citizen of London, 1659–1695. Henry Purcell. Inscribed to commemorate the Tercentenary of his Birth'. In the centre of the engraving is a phrase of music. The key is G Minor. It is hard to discern what time code we are in or from which composition the phrase derives but the memorial is performative.

A later request for help tells us that this is 'When I am laid in earth', Dido's lament from *Dido and Aeneas* (1689). We are both listening to it, together, as we write this conclusion, an inscription becomes music. In retrospect, Dido's famous aria is fitting not only as an inscription to Purcell, but also to the ideas accumulated through this collection. She sings:

> When I am laid, am laid in earth, may my wrongs create
> No trouble, no trouble in, in thy breast
> Remember me, remember me, but ah
> Forget my fate
>
> (Tate 1689)

The lament, by way of beautiful serendipity, is played annually at the Remembrance Sunday (Armistice) parade in Whitehall. In Purcell's score the ground bass, which sits a full four bars below the rest of the music, rumbles like a Merlin engine underneath the lightness of Dido's voice. 'Remember me', she says, hopefully, but 'forget my fate'. Perhaps this is the difference between remembering and commemorating, that in the latter, the fates of those commemorated ought not be forgotten, no matter how painful, no matter the 'trouble in thy breast'.

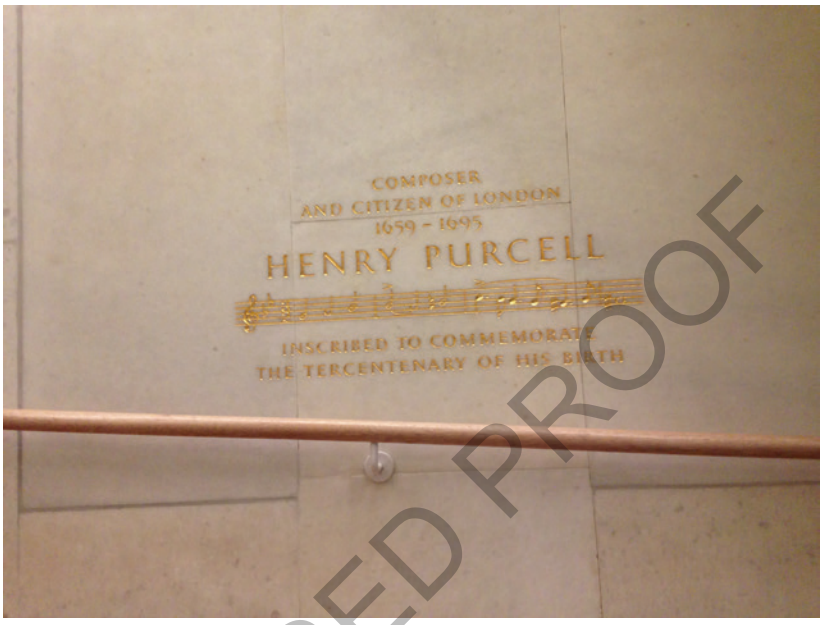

Fig. 15.1 Inscription dedicated to Henry Purcell at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London. The music pictured is a fragment of *Dido's Lament: When I Am Laid in Earth* from *Dido & Aeneas* (1689)

4

The engraving both commemorates and performs the music of a man who died over 300 years ago. We might think about this phrase of music as a memorial to his memory played out in our minds. The carving of Purcell's music reminded me of the memorials etched onto the walls in Sarajevo where shells fell, names of casualties carved into the stone, 'inscribed to commemorate' their deaths. I write in *Making Bolero* about the Sarajevo Roses, where red wax has been poured into the ground to fill the pockmarked pavement, the scarred road. What I remember now, having read Andrew Westerside's opening to this conclusion, is that when you read their names and the date when the bomb fell, you hear the shell fall again. Each bullet hole in the wall calls to mind the sniper

fire that ricocheted around the city. Each Sarajevo Rose in the ground connotes the blood spilt on the street and the shell exploding.

5

The foyer resonates with the hubbub of a Friday night South Bank Centre audience, but I try and hear the music 'inscribed to commemorate' him. And what does it mean to 'inscribe to commemorate', to write, to carve, to record, to compose, to draw, to mark, to remember? How might these chapters in this book 'inscribe to commemorate' a project, a moment, a time? In geometry, to inscribe means to draw (a figure) within another so that their boundaries touch but do not intersect, literally, to draw within, to scribe in. Our chapters have also been inscribed separately, to write, to record, to remember, but without intersecting, beyond the thematic frames with which we have divided the book. However now, to conclude, literally to bring to an ending, our task is to seek these intersections, to scribe out. Our role as editors was to create a space within which this discourse could take place. When we convened a symposium of the same name at the University of Lincoln on 16 June 2016, almost two years ago to the time of writing this, we did not know that we would be inscribing some of those papers into a publication, but connections started to be made.

6

Just like the equator in Lisa Gaughan's chapter on 'crossing the line', we were aware of a tentative and intangible line between two theoretical hemispheres, the performative and the commemorative. Our symposium and this publication, sought to explore where the line was crossed. Our chapters have become like the latitudinal lines that define time zones and explore different proxemics of loss; personal loss, political loss, memory loss, history loss, the loss of belonging, the loss of self. These categories sound discrete, but the map of this territory is unstable and unreliable. As Kyborski wrote, the map is not the territory and there is slippage at sea (Korzybski 1931, pp. 747–761). We see a sharing of political latitudes between Gaughan's 'crossing of the line' and Donald Pulford's chapter on *The History Wars*. There is a personal latitude shared by Clare Parry-Jones poetic description of the loss of a child and Louie Jenkins' loss of a loved one.

7

A sharing of Second World War-related latitude between Dan Ellin and Conan Lawrence's work on (and with) *Bomber Command*, and Karen Savage and Justin Smith's *Watching with Mother*. The First World War connects both Andrew Westerside's account of *Leaving Home* and Helen Newall's *Remember Me* to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in *Making Bolero: Dramaturgies of Remembrance*. There are forensic, autobiographical processes at play in Emily Orley's *Searching Shadows, Lighting Bones* and Chloe Dechery's *A Duet Without You*—both appropriately presented *in absentia* at the original symposium, one on vinyl, the other on video, both salvaged from their inherent and fragile ethereality by their appropriate forms of documentation. There is a piece about writing itself by Andrew Quick that seeks to connect the act of remembering with the erasure of memory and the theatre-making process in the case of The Wooster Group as akin to writing—like the inscription on the wall. As Berger said, 'A story is always a rescuing operation' (Berger 2016).

8

Back at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in April 2018. When I enter the auditorium, I am struck by the smell of new seats, the new carpet, it has the aroma of a car salesroom, and I notice that everyone else is taking photos of themselves when they arrive, marking the moment. They are commemorating their own attendance, no doubt to inscribe these commemorative selfies digitally online using social media. Whereas in the past we chiselled our memories into walls, now we place ourselves within the frame. We have moved beyond the age of Darian Leader's *Stealing the Mona Lisa* (2002), when more people visited the Louvre to see the space left behind by the theft of Da Vinci's famous portrait in 1911, to a time of '*Snapchatting the Mona Lisa*'.

9

Now we are living in an era where to be seen to be somewhere is more important than simply being there. In this example, the audience missed the house lights fading, the music brewing, the lights slowly turning a

deep ochre, the performers coming onstage. All this is lost to an audience too consumed by their own image to be engaged in the present. The commemoration of performance exists in these daily, mundane moments as much as it does in the engraving on a marble foyer wall. My colleague at the University of Lincoln tells me that 'millennials' are having bar codes tattooed onto their skin that can be read digitally to prompt downloads of a personal memory e.g. the laughter of a lover, the first words of a child, etc. I wonder if body-based, digital memorials like this will survive the ageing of skin, the unstable archiving of the Internet, the imminent Russian cyber attack. I sense that these performances of commemoration might fail and our embodied memories will outlive them.

10

On the way back from St. Pancras I see the new commission in the Grand Hall. A large-scale neon installation by the artist, Tracey Emin. Pink letters spell out the phrase 'I want my time with you' and it sits in front of the large clock, casting a rosy glow onto the platforms. Emin has spoken about how the message is addressed to mainland Europe in the run up to Brexit, reflecting on the political and cultural 'loss' that she states this decision stages. There are resonances here too with Action Hero's *Oh Europa* (2018) mentioned in Chapter 1. Emin, like Action Hero, perhaps like Purcell, is writing a love letter to the future where her words will be read anew. She suggests it also speaks of lovers meeting at train stations or their fond farewells. It frames, like an illuminated proscenium arch, the statue of two kissing lovers beneath it, and draws attention to their embrace against the relentless and overbearing sense of time passing. Emin's work calls to mind the writing on absence and temporality by Phelan and Derrida. Derrida considers how we might perform absence and, in doing so, evoke memories of presences. He writes that 'Theatre is born of its own disappearance' (1978, p. 223). Phelan writes about how 'Performance marks the body itself as loss' (1993, p. 148). But what does she mean by this? How might the ephemeral nature of a live act somehow speak of our own mortality, the unstoppable and irrevocable passage of time. It is in this space that Emin's piece speaks about commemoration and how we remember as individuals and as a nation.

11

I wrote a performance text called *Sit with me for a moment and remember* (2014) about this on Remembrance Day when we traditionally stand and reflect for two minutes to remember the fallen. Sometimes this silence is disrupted and our stillness and moments of reflection becomes incongruous. I remember standing for the two-minute silence in a university café when no one else seemed to know what time it was, or indeed was unmoved by it. The text in *Sit with me for a moment and remember* says:

> And when we take time to remember. It is because this city tells us to. A two-minute silence to remember. A two-minute silence to mourn. A two-minute silence to think about someone or something we lost. A two-minute silence to look at the sky and wonder why. A two-minute silence to look at our shoes and feel ashamed. A two-minute silence that makes us want to cry. A two-minute silence that makes us want to stop the clocks. A two-minute silence that makes us want to stop…[1]

12

A coda: I write this conclusion and look out over the city of Lincoln from the University Campus that used to be a Railway Engine Shed at the cathedral which sits upon the hill, I think about research I have done into the site as a beacon for Second World War pilots. In 2003, I made a site-specific performance with Metro-Boulot-Dodo in the cathedral's roof space, commemorating the cathedral's history and its relationship to both world wars.[2] On returning to their Lincolnshire air bases after a bombing raid, and especially if their navigation system had sustained damage, the aircrew would line their sights on the cathedral. There is a story about how a Canadian pilot flew too low over the top and one of his Bomber's wheels caught the roof and ended up in the Bishop's garden. Now the IBCC museum, mentioned by Dan Ellin and Conan Lawrence in Chapter 7, sits upon another hill opposite, its

[1] Pinchbeck, M. 2014. *Sit with me for a moment and remember*. First performed: Manchester, Hazard Festival.

[2] *Watch This Space: Lincoln Cathedral*, Metro-Boulot-Dodo and Bathysphere, June 2003, Commissioned by EMPAC.

vast wing-like structure almost in dialogue with the cathedral's spires, between them marking, and remembering, 1000 years of history. One landmark had welcomed them home and the other commemorates the pilots that lost their lives flying from and to the local airfields. The official opening ceremony recently featured a performance to remember them, pilots brought to life with verbatim text and a sense of what it was like to go on a raid. A flypast of remaining bombers was vetoed by the weather.

13

I remember my grandmother telling me about watching low-flying Lancaster bombers follow the canal through Saxilby. They were flying under telegraph wires, practising for the Dambusters raid. I remember my mum telling me about how she learnt to drive on an abandoned RAF runway in North Scarle. I remember my Grandad telling me he had POWs working on his farm in nearby Thorney. I remember finding out that the Grandstand on the edge of the city was used as an airbase in the First World War and that soldiers practised digging trenches on the Racecourse. I remember finding out the tank was conceived in a hotel in Lincoln and tried and tested on the common where people now play golf oblivious to this history. I remember seeing Blueprints in the Lincolnshire Archives that show the Grandstand was earmarked as a civilian mortuary in the event of Lincoln becoming a target during the war and sustaining heavy casualties. I remember my grandmother telling me they used to sit out in their garden near Newark and watch Nottingham burning on the horizon. I remember the shell I found in the Iron Harvest. I remember the Sarajevo Roses and how I heard shells falling. I remember the music etched into the wall and how I heard it playing. Every city has a history like this, remembered, passed down through generations, recorded, inscribed in our memories to commemorate events. We are consciously weaving together the autobiographical with the historical, the personal with the political. As Matthew Goulish writes, 'Some words speak of events. Other words, events make us speak' (2000, p. 152). These chapters in this book are the words that events have made us speak and it is through the performative utterance that they first found an audience; now it is through this book.

14

Another coda: As I finish the first draft of this conclusion before sending it to my co-editor I look out of my window again. This time a large unmarked aeroplane is passing over the cathedral from the North East. It has a large, radar disc attached to its tail and is starting its descent. We know of active military bases in the area involved in surveillance and security but it is still surprising to see them fly overhead. Once last year during a two-minute silence to remember the casualties of a recent terror attack I was struck by the droning sound of its approach. My colleague casually looks up at it and remarks 'It's probably back from Syria'. Nothing changes but everything changes. We mark, we mourn, we remember, we stage loss all the time. We carve names on the walls. We ink names, and barcodes, onto our skin. We write poems, plays, performances, chapters, books and perhaps all we ever seek, all we ever want, is to be remembered. Because in performing commemoration we leave a memory of ourselves behind, on our stages, on our pages, our words that spoke of events, our words events made us speak. To recall Andrew Quick's citation of Tennessee Williams: 'Life is all memory, except for the one present moment that goes by you so quickly you hardly catch it going'. This book is an attempt to catch it all going. And in the attempt lies a staging of loss.

15

A final coda: On Friday 4 May 2018 when we sit together to review the final editing process of this publication at approximately 11.30 a.m., a lone Lancaster Bomber makes its way across Lincoln. People stop what they are doing and look to the sky. Traffic pauses. Passers-by stand with their hands over their eyes and talk about what they are witnessing. It is like a bird spotter suddenly catching sight of a rare species. We talk about how loud it is, the 1940s Merlin engine rumbling overhead, how deafening it is on its own but how it would have been even more overpowering when flying in a squadron of 90 aeroplanes. We talk about how it might be the postponed fly past from last month's opening ceremony of the IBCC. Or how it might be flying home to wherever it is based as one of only two left that are airworthy. The UK only has one. The other is based in Canada. We talk about how the BBC set up microphones in a garden in Surrey on 19 May 1942 to record the sound of Nightingales

singing, but inadvertently recorded a squadron of 192 Wellington and Lancaster Bombers taking off on a bombing raid to Germany, the roar of their engines soon drowning out the birdsong.[3] The sound of battle consuming everything in its wake, overwriting the pastoral. We talk about how nature and warfare are so often in conflict in the world and in this publication and how again, to return to Hemingway's opening words from *A Farewell to Arms*, we think about Frederic Henry as his narration travels through the seasons:

> … in the fall when the rain came the leaves all fell from the chestnut trees and the branches were bare and the trunks black with rain. The vineyards were thin and bare-branched too and all the country wet and brown and dead with the Autumn… At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera. But it was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army. (2004, p. 4)

In this publication, in the events they mark, commemorate and remember, like the glass of whisky raised to the memory of a loved one, the fragile paper memorial, taken away by the tide, and the solitary helmet washed up on a beach, nothing remains 'except for the leaves' (2004, p. 3).

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[3] Nightingale sings as RAF bombers fly past on 29 May 1942. Footage can be heard here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_MHqW5KVds.

Index

M. Pinchbeck and A. Westerside (eds.), *Staging Loss*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97970-0

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